ABSTRACT

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PATCHIN: TOWARDS A THEORY AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF AFRICANA AGRARIANISM

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This is a theoretical dissertation that seeks to explore the implications of using an Africana agrarian development philosophy to examine the historical evolution of African-American communities and social movements in the United States. The central theme of this study is the importance of recentering the land question as a theoretical tool used to construct narratives of the cultural development of African-American rural and farming communities. Particular emphasis is placed upon using the notion of an ecological revolution to explain African-American responses to the socio-economic problems that have emerged from their relationship to the American state and, the resultant paradigms that have developed, within the tradition of African-American political philosophy, to both perceive and address these issues.

PATCHIN: TOWARDS A THEORY AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF AFRICANA AGRARIANISM

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAAT	African-American Agrarian Tradition
AAC	African Agrarian Culture
AAPT	African-American Political Thought
AARFC	African-American Rural and Farming Communities
AARSM	African-American Rural Social Movements
AAT	Africana Agrarian Tradition
APT	Africana Political Thought
BERC	Black Economic Research Center
BFAA	Black Farmer's and Agriculturalist Association
BPP	Black Panther Party
BRC	Black Radical Congress
BSCPM	Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids
BWJ	Black Workers for Justice
CCT	Concerned Citizens of Tillery
CDP	Comprehensive Development Plan
CFP	Community Food Project
COFO	Council on Federated Organizations
COMECON	Council of Mutual Economic Assistance

CORE	Congress On Racial Equality
CRAT	Civil Rights Action Team
CRM	Civil Rights Movement
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
CVC	Creating Vibrant Communities
CVCUF	Creating Vibrant Community Urban Farms
DOJ	Department of Justice
EJM	Environmental Justice Movement
ELF	Emergency Land Fund
ENL	Excessive Nutrient Loading
FmHA	Famer's Home Administration
FDP	Freedom Democratic Party
FFC	Freedom Farm Cooperative
FSA	Farm Security Administration
FSC	Federation of Southern Cooperatives
H.E.L.P	Halifax Environmental Loss Prevention
LPR	Laporte, Petras and Rinehart
LVC	La Via Campesina
MPP	Peasant Movement of Papay
MPNKP	National Peasant Movement of the Congress of Papay

NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NBFA	National Black Farmer's Association
NBFOA	Network of Black Farm Organizations and Advocates
NDRP	New Deal Resettlement Program
NOI	Nation of Islam
NPUTCFP	Neighborhood Planning Unit- T Community Food Project
NPU	Neighborhood Planning Unit
OCREA	Office of Civil Rights Enforcement and Adjudication
PGRNA	Provisional Government of New Africa
PLBA	Panola Land Buyers Association
RNA	Republic of New Africa
RPC	Rossett, Patel and Courville
SAAFON	Southeastern African-American Farmers Organic Network
SAWG	Southern Sustainable Agricultural Working Group
SBM	Shrine of the Black Madonna
SC	Sobhan's Categories
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SCU	Sharecropper's Union
SNCC	Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee
SLFC	Savannah Local Food Collaborative

SOGREEN	Southeastern Green Network
STFU	Southern Tenant Farmer's Union
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
VIFC	Virgin Islands Farmer's Cooperative
WSS	Western Social Science
WTO	World Trade Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> The shiny apple (New York) is bruised but sweet and if you choose to eat, you could loose your teeth, many crews retreat; nightly news repeat who got shot down and locked down, spotlight the savages, nasdaq averages; my *narrative* rose to explain this existence, amidst the harbor lights which remain in the distance.[1]

This dissertation, in many ways, seeks to take the form of a narrative. By definition, it is also a conversation. Its ultimate goal is to explore the centrality and importance of the land question[2] to African-American social movements. Its implications, however, are global and transcend historically African people's very limited experience in the Western Hemisphere. We use the terms narrative and conversation because a dissertation can best be understood as a dialogue. On one hand, this conversation seeks to demonstrate to those who have helped to shape my intellectual development at Clark Atlanta University my commitment to and understanding of the legacy of our department[3] as a social and intellectual space dedicated to exploring both problems and solutions associated with African emancipatory politics in the broadest sense. On the other hand, it is indeed a narrative. This project seeks to (1) *tell the story* of African people's relationship to the earth, (2) reveal how this relationship was transformed by the expansion of European cultural hegemony and the emergence of the American state, and (3) explore to what degree our understanding of this phenomenon

can give us greater insight into the historical and contemporary dimensions of African social movements in the United States.

In many ways, this project is an extension of my master's thesis titled *The Re-Emergence of Indigenous Political Philosophy*, where we attempted to contribute to the maturity of what has often been described as a genuine, Africana social science tradition through an exploration of the conflict that seemed to have existed between proponents of an authentic "African" political tradition, with its roots in pre-colonial Africa versus an authentic "Black" political tradition emerging out of the socio-political experiences of African people in the United States. In simpler terms, the historic squabble between cultural nationalist political thought and Black radicalism seemed to be in full swing during my early years as a graduate student in the Atlanta University Center. Although the phenomenon was clearly not original, it took on new dimensions due to the expansion of a significant body of literature that emerged out of what would come to be known as the African Centered Movement.[4] The goal of my thesis was to account for the conditions under which this renewed interest in indigenous African political thought had emerged. I argued that,

> African intellectuals have always struggled to construct paradigms through which they could evaluate both the internal and external struggles peculiar to the development of African people. Over the past sixty years these paradigms have been fashioned in some way, shape or form by the western, liberal capitalist tradition and/or the Marxist tradition, in both hybrid and orthodox forms. Both paradigms emerge out of the historical development of traditional and modern Europe. Although we have attempted to modify them to meet the needs of our struggle, we have continued to hold on to their basic assumptions.[5]

In short, the call for an authentically African centered political tradition, rooted in

indigenous African culture, attempted to expand beyond the confines of the western political canon in both liberal and radical forms. Its most common strategy was to reformulate the age-old debate delineating the differences that existed between the "African worldview" and the "European worldview." In more specific terms, indigenous African spirituality, and its impact upon indigenous African political institutions and socialization structures, differed markedly from the vulgar materialist, interest driven, hyper-secular nature of European political culture, according to proponents of African centered thought. The emphasis upon an African spirituality, however, did not fit neatly into the mainstream discourse associated with African-American political theory. In addition, proponents of an African-centered approach to political philosophy and political economy often failed to outline clearly a specific set of principles that were, (1) genuinely rooted in pre-colonial indigenous African cultural formations and (2) capable of addressing comprehensively the myriad social and material problems associated with the African world in the last quarter of the 20th century. As Kwame Agyei Akoto argues,

> The ideology (African centered thought and nationalism) has been forcefully and clearly addressed for generations, but overall the ideology has lacked coherency and adequate theoretical clarity to apply at the grassroots level of organizing, or apply to the conditions encountered in personal interactions. The conceptions of culture, history, politics and spirituality have not always been presented in a coherent fashion.[6]

For this reason, an effort was made to situate the re-emergence of indigenous Africana political philosophy within the context of what I described as the "pursuit for a true social science by indigenous people of color who have been both victims and compradors of western cultural and economic exploitation."[7] Because indigenous African cultural

thought assumes that the motive force for human development, and therefore socio-political organization, is spiritual development, an attempt was made to survey, within the western cultural tradition and Africana political thought (APT), discourse that spoke to and/or explored the notion of a spiritual universe and its role in shaping our understanding of politics, broadly defined, and national liberation.[8] To this end, the thesis explored new developments in the areas of indigenous knowledge, theoretical physics, ancient western political thought, African nationalist thought during the anti-colonial period, and development theory. Although the process was rewarding, the task of defining and describing an authentically indigenous, African political philosophy, within the U.S. context, remained incomplete. It is the purpose of this dissertation to advance that project through engaging what we have termed the land question.

Statement of the Problem

> When men speak they say the world has been spoiled. When women speak they say the world has been spoiled. It is because good leadership has disappeared among them. The way the sun rises has not changed. The way the night falls has not changed. The way people are born has not changed.[9]

> In recent years it has become increasingly apparent that the issue of environmental quality is inextricably linked to that of human equality. Wherever in the world environmental despoliation and degradation is happening, it is almost always linked to questions of social justice, equity, rights and people's quality of life in the widest sense.[10]

Most assessments of the collective social conditions of African communities, globally speaking, reveal a picture that is both bleak and seemingly insurmountable. Of the fifty states categorized as "least developed countries" by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) secretariat, thirty-four of the fifty are

located in sub-Saharan Africa.[11] Collectively, sub-Saharan African countries have the highest infant mortality rate at 172/1000 births, the lowest secondary school enrollment ratio at 18.89%, and the lowest adult literacy rate at 49.8%.[12] Sub-Saharan Africa remains the worst effected region in the world by HIV and is home to 64% of the world's population living with AIDS, approximately 24.5 million people.[13] Three fourths of all women infected with the AIDS virus live in sub-Saharan Africa. Forty-six countries suffer from some of the highest levels of malaria.[14] Africa ranked second regionally, only to Asia and Oceania, in the number of conflicts taking place, nine of which are categorized as severe crisis or war.[15]

The condition of African communities in the diaspora, in many ways, is analogous. Afro-Latino people represent one third of Latin America's population yet comprise of fifty percent of the region's poor.[16] For African people in the United States, the portrait is similar. African-American children are four times as likely as white babies to have their mothers die at childbirth. African-American youth are forty-eight times more likely to be incarcerated than white youth.[17] Firearms have killed more African-American children and teens over the past six years than those who were murdered during the recorded history of lynching in the United States. In 2001, an African-American boy of pre-school age had a 1 in 3 chance of going to prison in his lifetime. For African-American girls, it was 1 in 7. Close to 600,000 African-American males are serving sentences in state and federal prisons. At the same time, fewer than 40,000 earn bachelor's degrees each year. One in three African-American males between the ages of 20-29 is under correctional supervision and control. African-American girls represent the

fastest growing group of detained juveniles. African-American people comprise only 14% of the known drug using population within the United States yet represent 37% of those arrested and 53% of those in state prison on drug offenses.[18]

According to recent economic data, the income and earnings of African-American men are 72% of the income and earnings of white males. For African-American women, it is 86% of the income and earnings of white women. In addition, nearly three times more African Americans than whites are living below 125% of the poverty line.[19] The poverty rate for rural African-American communities is 33%, 3 times that of the rural white population. Only 64% of the rural African-American population in the United States has health insurance compared to 81% of rural whites. Less than 50% of African-American families own homes compared to 70% of white families.[20] African Americans, on average, live to 72 years of age compared to 78 years for whites. African-American people in the United States are 4 times as likely to die from diabetes, 16 times as likely to die as a victim of homicide, and 10 times as likely to die of HIV/AIDS.[21]

The socio-economic data described above is well known by grassroots activists, academicians, professional politicians, public intellectuals, entertainers, religious leaders, and "everyday people" across the ideological spectrum, within the African-American community. Whether it is on the corner, in the barbershop, nail salon, church, school, the workplace, or on television, issues like the down low brother, low wage paying jobs, problems with urban education, incarcerated youth, drug abuse, single mothers, unresponsive professional politicians, urban violence, white racism, etc. are popular topics of discussion. What is not often discussed is the degree to which the state of the

earth itself parallels the social conditions and contradictions we see within the African-American community.

According to the United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment initiated in 2001, "over the past 50 years humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history, largely to meet rapidly growing demands for food, fresh water, timber, fiber and fuel. This has resulted in a substantial and largely irreversible loss in the diversity of life on Earth."[22]

This rapid transformation can be viewed on multiple levels. The ten warmest years on record have occurred since 1990. Since the early 1900's, the average global temperature has risen .6 degrees Celsius. The rate of change since 1976 has tripled the rate of change for the century as a whole. In 2004, the average atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration reached 377.4 parts per million, by volume. The average carbon dioxide concentration has increased more than 19% since 1959. Since the beginning of the industrial age, it has increased by 35%.[23] The impact of global warming[24] is far reaching. Higher temperatures and rapidly changing precipitation rates have driven non-human animal species northward to higher elevations, impacting the timing of breeding, migratory seasons, and plant blooming. [25] The increased use of fossil fuels for energy, coupled with the expansion of industrial agriculture and its dependence on petroleum-based fertilizers, has altered both carbon and nitrogen cycles. Both cycles are intimately related to two primary life processes, photosynthesis and respiration.[26] The use of synthetic nitrogen, for example, has increased fivefold since 1960. More than 50% of the increase contributes to pollution of our fresh water systems through a process called

excessive nutrient loading (ENL). ENL is responsible for the decrease in available drinking water, increased nitrous oxide emissions contributing to global climate change, eutrophication in fresh water systems, where excessive plant growth contributes to a decrease in available oxygen, and hypoxia in coastal marine ecosystems, where the depletion of oxygen contributes to die-offs of fish and other aquatic life creating the infamous "dead zones" evocative of the Louisiana coastline in the Gulf of Mexico. Due to modern industries heavy dependence on logging and mineral extraction, over 50% of the world's forest cover has been lost since 1950. Of the fourteen terrestrial biomes on earth, more than half of the surface area of six terrestrial biomes has been converted to agriculture.[27] It is in the world's tropical rainforest where 50% of the world's species reside. This has contributed to the population decline of nearly one in four mammal species.[28] Since the birth of the modern era, humans have increased the species extinction rate by as much as 1000 times the rate typical over the planet's history. Over the past few decades, coral reefs and mangroves, central to the health of marine ecosystems, have been either degraded or lost by as much as 40%.[29] In addition, human consumption habits have contributed to two thirds of the world's major fish stocks being fished at or beyond the capacity to recover naturally. Since 2000, Arctic temperatures have increased to twice the average rate of the rest of the world. Sea ice in the bioregion has declined between 15-20% in the last thirty years, which is wreaking havoc on indigenous plant and animal species.[30] Since 1960, the construction of major dam projects has quadrupled.[31] Currently, three to six times more water is held in man made reservoirs than in natural river systems.[32] Many argue that the world's hydrological

cycles are being altered, and this is causing extreme drought, for example, the conditions in the southeastern United States and East Africa and the increasingly destructive and more frequent hurricanes in areas like the Gulf of Mexico. As Mos Def, hip-hop activist and intellectual, aptly alerts us,

> New World Water makes the tide rise high.
> Come in and it'll make your house go "Bye"
> Fools done upset the Old Man River.
> Made him carry slave ships and fed him dead niggaz
> Now his belly full and he about to flood somethin
> So I'ma throw a rope that ain't tied to nothin.[33]

Because of the transformation of the arctic bioregion, the shrinking of the world's mountain glaciers, and an increase in the annual human withdrawal of water from natural circulation by as much as 35 times since the late 17th century, it is predicted that wars over oil will be replaced by wars over water in the 21st century.[34]

Despite the fact that there are obvious parallels between the socio-economic conditions of African-American communities and the rapid degradation and instability of the earth's biosphere, contemporary APT has yet to embrace fully the implications of a worldview and political vision that weds a consciousness of social justice and African community development to a *land based consciousness*. A cursory overview of contemporary literature on APT and the general areas of African-American politics and Africana studies will support this assumption.

Survey of Literature

Existing academic texts covering the broad area of African-American politics either totally ignore or scantly cover environmental or land based issues. *African*

Americans and the American Political System,[35] *African-American Perspectives on Political Science,*[36] and *African Americans and the Public Agenda*[37] are classic examples of the tendency to ignore the subjects altogether. Fortunately, Hanes Walton Jr. and Robert C. Smith's *American Politics and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom*[38] is an exception that is debatably worth noting. Out of three hundred and four pages, Hanes and Smith spend less than a half page on the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM).[39] The literature on African-American political thought exhibits the same tendency. The multiple works of Manning Marable, *Beyond Africana and White: Transforming African-American Politics*, *Race and Labor Matters in the US Economy* co-edited with Immanuel Ness and Joseph Wilson, *Speaking Truth to Power: Essays on Race Resistance and Radicalism*, *Black Liberation In Conservative America and Black American Politics: From the Washington Marches to Jesse Jackson*, follow this same pattern. Marable's *Race, Reform and Rebellion* deviates slightly from the norm in an attempt to historically locate what he calls the Second Reconstruction, African-American social movements between the years 1945-2001.[40] Marable begins the discussion through an analysis of the failure of the First Reconstruction (1865-1877). Inspired by Dubois's *Black Reconstruction* and C. Vann Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, he identifies the failure of land reform during the First Reconstruction as the principal reason for its demise, hence the need for a Second Reconstruction. According to Marable "the failure of the federal government to recognize the necessity for massive land distribution, along the lines of what Blacks themselves called "forty acres and a mule," would be the principal reason for the failure of the First Reconstruction."[41]

Although Marable begins with this analysis, land issues are noticeably absent from the remainder of the text. Attempts to categorize streams within APT follow this same pattern. Anthony Bogues, in his essay *Teaching Radical Africana Political Thought and Intellectual History*, suggests that the tradition of radical APT is characterized by a second sight.[42] Second sight is described as a commitment to both engage the western intellectual tradition while at the same time constructing "new historical narratives and political discourses" that speak to what Frantz Fanon classically describes as the "call for a new human."[43] Clearly present within Bogues discussion are the categories of class, gender, and nation as the basis for "different traditions peculiar to different sites" within the universe of APT.[44] The land question, however, is noticeably absent as both a tradition and site. John T. McCartney's *Black Power Ideologies: an Essay in African-American Thought* and Michael Dawson's *Black Visions: the Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* either ignores or treats the land question as a small tributary in the tradition of APT. Dawson's "six historically important Black political ideologies," radical egalitarianism, disillusioned liberalism, Black conservatism, Back Marxism, Black feminism, and Black nationalism,[45] as well as Cha Jua's three "ideological traditions in Black political thought and practice," Black integrationism, Black nationalism, and Black radicalism,[46] fail to take into consideration the role of the land question in shaping the contours of APT.

Standard text in the field of Africana Studies follows this same pattern. Maulana Karenga's *Introduction to Black Studies* approaches the land question within the tradition

of Dubois and Marable as an issue of concern for African-American communities during the Reconstruction period.[47] Marable's three hundred and eleven page edited volume, *The New Black Renaissance: The Souls Anthology of Critical African-American Studies*, dedicated to a "renaissance or refoundation of the Black intellectual tradition in the neoliberal age of empire and globalization," only devotes a chapter by Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie to unearthing the origins of the term 40 acres and a mule.[48] Molefi Kete Asante and Maulana Karenga's four hundred and fifty seven page edited volume, *Handbook of Black Studies*, ignores the land question entirely with the exception of a three-page article, by Elisa Larkin Nascimento, titled *Kilombismo: an African Brazillian Orientation to Africology*.[49] Essentially, an overview of the theoretical significance of Afro-Brazillian intellectual Abdias do Nascimento's idea of Kilombismo for Africana studies, Larkin-Nascimento argues, "kilombismo's stance is strongly ecological" based upon its foundations in the "profoundly environmentalist philosophy of African religious culture in Brazil, in particular Cadomble."[50] In addition, Larkin-Nascimento places the emergence of Kilombismo as a political theory within the context of the popular Afro-Brazillian national movement that emerged in 1980 to reclaim the Serra de Barriga, the former land base of Palmares. According to Nascimento, "Kilombismo opposes environmental pollution and favors all forms of environmental improvement that can ensure healthy life for children, women, men, animals, marine life, plants, forests, rock and stone, and all manifestations of nature."[51]

Surprisingly, Tallmadge Anderson and James Stewart's, *Introduction to African-American Studies: Transdisciplinary Approaches and Implications* devote two and a half

pages to environmental justice and racism as an extension of the sub-field of "Science, Technology and African Americans."[52] Specific emphasis is placed upon the necessity for African-American Studies to explore the "complexities of monitoring and assessing the many and multifaceted ways science and technology can be used to reinforce existing inequalities".[53]

Naturally, the question why is the land question noticeably absent within the tradition of APT arises? We can account for its absence for two interrelated reasons. The first is the crisis of overspecialization; the second is the crisis of the urban bias.

Crisis of Overspecialization

If one looks closely at the historical development of APT, it will become quite clear that one of its central aims has been to challenge the western social science (WSS) canon and its legitimacy as an instrument to understand the complexities of African life and social problems. Consistently, it argues that overspecialization is one of WSS's major flaws. According to James Stewart,

> Although the prevalence of interdisciplinary social science initiatives is increasing, discipline specific research remains the norm. This high level of compartmentalization reinforces tendencies to produce studies yielding only minor incremental additions to knowledge about highly specialized topics and there are few incentives to develop the type of comprehensive analysis envisioned by Africana Studies theorists.[54]

Overspecialization is a function of two problems within the western academic tradition. The first can be linked to the scientific method as an epistemological construct. According to Judith Soule and John Piper, at the foundation of modern science is the concept of reductionism. Reductionism is predicated upon three specific values:

simplification, quantification, and objectivity. Simplification, according to Soule and Piper, is valuable in the sense that "it allows us to discover critical factors- that have a strong influence on a system."[55] Its weakness lies in that "it narrows the set of causal factors considered, and even more, the set of effects observed, it opens us to the danger of missing a great deal of the functioning of complex systems." Quantification attempts to "search for simple, elegant portrayals of the rules of nature (and human social reality)[56] through the use of mathematical principles. The obvious challenge is that the behavior of both nature and human beings "does not fit neatly into numbers."[57] Objectivity, the mantra of the western scientific community, moves from the assumption that both natural and social scientists can study nature and social reality "without self-involvement and value prejudice" because what we are studying is "outside of ourselves."[58] Out of the three core principles, objectivity has been challenged most often by non-western social scientists. Mack Jones in his article, *Worldview, Social Sciences and the Understanding of Social Realities* argues that,

> how social scientists explain, describe and assign meaning to social reality is determined to a great extent by the assumptions that inform their research and writing. That is to say that all efforts to know the world, to understand and explain reality, must necessarily begin with certain prior assumptions about the very nature of that reality, a reality that not only has been created by the people themselves, but one in which they have a vested interest in seeing in a positive light. These prior assumptions that condition inquiry are derivative of their worldview.[59]

The second major problem associated with overspecialization is very much linked to the pursuit of tenure. The traditional tenure process is predicated upon the professional intellectual's capacity to distinguish himself/ herself as a scholar by becoming a

"specialist" who studies a given social or natural phenomenon. This inevitably leads towards the compartmentalization of knowledge because success is intimately linked to the ability of the researcher to differentiate their knowledge production process from their colleagues. Generally speaking, the professional intellectual is not encouraged to engage in research as a collective process. The privatization of knowledge, then, becomes a precondition to obtain a higher salary and job security.

Reductionism, coupled with the tenure process, logically creates a context where social scientists are limited, often self-consciously, to a narrow discipline focus as they attempt to study phenomenon that are inherently complex and more suited to an approach that is interdisciplinary in nature. APT, in many ways, is still informed by this tendency.

Crisis of the Urban Bias

Echoing Mack Jones's notion that a scholar's worldview informs how he/she approaches the study of particular social problems,[60] it is important to consider how APT has been informed and, too often, straitjacketed by core values within the western worldview. This is particularly important for the set of beliefs that represent what we are calling the urban bias. In basic terms, the urban bias, as a set of values, assumes the following:

1. The mark of an "advanced society" is the degree to which human communities are removed from rural life in a general sense, agrarian life in particular.
2. Urbanization is a principle feature of "developed" societies.

3. "High levels" of technological development and mass consumption are principle features of developed societies.
4. Pre-colonial and pre-modern socio-economic and technological formations are "primitive." This is particularly true of communities that emerge out of the cultural and historical experiences of indigenous people of color.

The urban bias's impact upon APT is far reaching. We will attempt to illustrate this through a brief discussion centered on one issue that has historically shaped discourse within the tradition of APT, culturalism versus political economy as a tool of analysis.

Historically, Africana nationalist political thought, in its contemporary academic manifestation as African centered thought, has received criticism for what some describe as racial essentialism and a preoccupation with narrow conceptions of culturalism. Critics of African centered thought have often challenged its theoretical basis, citing the absence of a class and/or materialist analysis as its central weakness. For Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, in his discussion *Black Studies in the New Millennium: Resurrecting Ghosts of the Past*, both Afrocentrism[61] and postmodernist theories have limited Black Studies, since the mid-1980s, to the realm of culturalism. According to Cha-Jua, "both nationalistic Afrocentrism and inclusionist postmodernism evade political economy and slight critiques of economic exploitation and structural oppression."[62] He goes on to add that social scientist, with a particular emphasis on historians who adopted John Blassingame's call for an approach to Africana Studies that "concentrates on community building,"[63] shifted their focus from external to internal factors. In Cha Jua's words, "this framework

failed to create a balance between examinations of the external and structural forces, that condition African-American life, and the internal factors that reveal the social relations, cultural values and socio-political architecture of the Black community."[64] The term culture, co-opted from the field of anthropology and used within the tradition of APT, emerges from four principal sources that have their roots theoretically and socially within anti-colonial movements and struggles for social justice among African communities in the United States in the latter half of the 20th century: (1) the political philosophy of Malcolm X through the organizational vehicle of the Nation of Islam and the Organization of Afro-American Unity, (2) Amilcar Cabral's conception of the relationship between culture and national liberation, (3) Maulana Karenga's Kawaida Theory, and (4) Harold Cruse's critique of African-American leadership in his seminal text *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual.* [65] More specifically, Malcolm X, as a theoretical personality, has contributed to the notion of cultural autonomy and revolution, in a popular sense, i.e., African identity politics, and Amilcar Cabral has contributed theoretically to clarifying the relationships between culture, strategies, and tactics associated with mass organization and nation building. Maulana Karenga's use of the term culture, principally, through Kawaida Theory, in many ways is a synthesis of Malcolm X's popular emphasis under girded by the political philosophies of Cabral, Gramsci, and Mao Tse Tung. Harold Cruse's critique of the "Negro intellectual" hastens us to consider the centrality of *indigenous* African-American culture in the formation of a vibrant, politically astute, creative African-American leadership against the backdrop of western cultural hegemony. Cruse's notion of a cultural revolution is worth considering.

> The new young generation must first clear the way to *cultural revolution* by a critical assault on the methods and ideology of the old-guard Negro intellectual elite. The failure and ideological shortcomings of this group have meant that no new directions, or insights have been imparted to the Negro masses. This absence of positive orientation has created a cultural void that has spawned all the present-day tendencies towards nihilism and anarchism, evident in the ideology of the young.[66]

This is not to suggest that any of the personalities listed have a historical monopoly on the concept of culture and its introduction into APT. What it does suggest is that the language used most often within APT, emerges out of their formulations. This is particularly true for the dichotomy that is often posed between cultural nationalism and Black radicalism. What is critical to understand, particularly through the theoretical contributions of Cabral, is that culture, as a concept, includes both the material conditions and the ideological realities of a given national community, in relationship to one another. Cabral states in his discussion National Liberation and Culture that "culture, the fruit of history, reflects at every moment, the material and spiritual (ideological) reality of society, of man the individual, and of man the social being, faced with conflicts which set him against nature and the exigencies of common life."[67] Definitions of culture used in contemporary literature and debates, however, do not express this duality, by default, in the African centered context, through theoretical exclusion in the context of Black radicalism, hence brother Cha Jua's notion of culture and political economy are separate yet interrelated areas of social analysis. This, in fact, is a misread of Cabral's contribution to APT. For this reason, it is important to re-emphasize the view that culture is the product of the duality that exists, in Cabral's terms, between the ideational/spiritual and material realms of human experience.[68] Given this analysis, culture, in a basic way, can

be defined as the totality of people's thought and practice; the dynamic interaction that exists between a group's worldview and the social relationships and institutions that are created to support it. More than anything else, culture defines how human communities develop.

Figure 1. Interrelationship between a Given Community's Worldview and Core Social Relationships and Institutions in the Formation of a National Culture.

All cultures address two fundamental areas of human life. The first area seeks to define relationships between human beings on various levels, i.e., defining what it means to be a "person," notions of gender, family, age (human growth and development), relationships between communities, etc. in the broadest sense. The second area informs human relationships to the natural world/land base; this includes perceptions of the earth, how humans relate to other non-human life forms (animals, plants, etc.), how humans define their material needs, and how natural resources are extracted and transformed for human consumption and use. The two areas act as opposite poles of the same reality, eventually giving birth, in a dynamic context, to what we call human culture. Echoing then, Brother Sundiata's discussion that post-modernism and Afrocentricity share a preoccupation with culturalism to the exclusion of political economy,[69] this study argues that contemporary

African centered thought, Black radicalism, and post-modernism share a pre-occupation with the urban bias. The most important weakness of African centered political thought, in its attempt to respond to critiques posed by the tradition of Black radicalism,[70] lies within its inability to reconcile the "rural roots" of indigenous Africa with the population it seeks to serve in a contemporary sense, i.e., predominantly urban universities and urbanized, working class, African-American communities. Hence the significance of Russell Adams assertion in 1977 that, "the proper place to begin to understand the nature of the contemporary Black Studies movement is not the campus but the city."[71] Indigenous African culture, the basis upon which African centered thought claims to stand, is profoundly rural and earth based in its orientation. How then can scholars and activist embracing the tradition, living and developing socially and intellectually within an urban context, grapple appropriately with its material and ideational constructs? In sharp contrast, radical, western political economy, which has heavily influenced the Black radical tradition, developed as a response to the rapid transformation of Western Europe's countryside and the emergence of urbanization and industrialization as prevailing models of human material and ideological and social development, consequently the heavy emphasis among Black radical theorist on the history, culture, and social problems of urbanized, African working communities. As a result, very little work has been done, within the context of APT, on the theoretical contributions, historical development, value and contemporary relevance of rural based,[72] African-American social movements. This dissertation will seek to fill that gap. A specific emphasis will be placed upon how the Africana Agrarian Tradition (AAT) can

inform our understanding of the development of African-American social movements and socio-political thought.

Theoretical Considerations: Why Agrarianism?

Agrarianism, according to Thomas P. Govan, is a term "of wide usage," yet it is often difficult to determine "what the word is intended to convey."[73] For this reason, it is important for us to define clearly what we mean by agrarianism. The term agrarian, etymologically speaking, derives from the Latin term *agran* and the Old English term *ager,* both referring to things "rural" or things connected to the "field."[74] Most often, within the context of the social sciences, agrarianism is associated with two phenomena. The first are things related to the culture and lifestyle of farming communities specifically and rural life in a general sense. The second is agrarian reform as a sociopolitical process.

Agrarianism as a Culture and Lifestyle

Wendell Berry, poet, author, and farmer in the American tradition of agrarian philosophers, associates agrarianism with the following principles:

> 1. Agrarianism rises up from the fields' woods and streams- from the complex soils, slopes, weathers, connections, influences and exchanges that we mean when we speak, for example, of the local community.
>
> 2. The agrarian mind is therefore local in its grounding and orientation. It must know on intimate terms the local plants and animals, and soils; it must know local possibilities and impossibilities, opportunities and hazards. It depends and insists on very particular local histories and biographies.
>
> 3. An agrarian economy is always a subsistence economy before it is a market economy. It is the subsistence part of the agrarian economy that assures its stability and survival. A subsistence economy, necessarily, is highly diversified.
>
> 4. Agrarianism assumes that the stability, coherence, and longevity of human

occupation require that the land should be divided among many owners and users.

5. In agrarianism you find the reoccurring theme that nature is the final judge, lawgiver, and pattern maker of and for the human use of the earth.[75]

For Govan, agrarianism, particularly during the era of industrialization, is most often a criticism of "progress, go getting, bigness, and mechanization."[76] Oddly enough, given the history of African-American people's relationship to the southern United States, agrarianism has often been associated with a "gentler, less competitive way of life" for white Southerners like Donald Davidson, who in 1930, argued that "the theory of agrarianism is that the culture of the soil is the best and most sensitive vocation, and that therefore it should have the economic preference and enlist the maximum number of workers."[77] If one looks closely at Berry's description of agrarianism, however, it can be clearly demonstrated that at its core, it represents a worldview that is multinational in its orientation. By worldview, we mean a coherent, integrated, comprehensive philosophy of life that informs how a given society is organized and how it perceives human development in the broadest sense. For this reason, we believe it is possible to unearth an authentic agrarian tradition out of the historical experiences of African-American communities. What then accounts for its absence within the context of APT?

Agrarian Reform

Agrarian reform has reemerged as a central question for public policy makers, social scientists, and social movement activists in the 21st century. Debates exist, however, over its form and function as a sociopolitical process. Laporte, Petras, and Rinehart (LPR) argue that agrarian reform can be classified into three groups, mild

agrarian reform, stronger agrarian reform, and strongest agrarian reform.[78] Distinctions between the three forms are largely determined by the degree to which the state is directly involved in regulating relationships between the tenant and the landlord. The mild form for instance, involves limited government intervention in supporting farmers and tenants on multiple levels, including leasing arrangements, credit, price supports, capital access, knowledge production, and infrastructure development. Stronger agrarian reform falls short of land expropriation but uses laws that regulate rents and limitations on the extent of land holdings. Strongest agrarian reform encourages "redistribution of land to the tillers, public ownership, collectivization, and expropriation."[79] Consistent with LPR, Rossett, Patel, and Courville (RPC) argue in their book *Promised Land* that two competing visions exist concerning the nature of agrarian reform: (1) agrarian reform from below and (2) market based agrarian reform.[80] Market-based agrarian reform is synonymous with the mild form previously described. In a contemporary sense, this model has shaped rural development strategies around the globe, principally, through the efforts of development organizations and agencies such as the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development. The values of competition, efficiency, the industrialization of agriculture through green revolution technologies, land privatization, and export agriculture are seen as the primary mechanisms through which farming communities will develop.[81] Conversely, agrarian reform from below emerges out of a different set of assumptions about rural development; this includes respect for local farmers' knowledge, the primacy of organic/sustainable agricultural methods, public ownership of land, state support for land redistribution, the centrality of farmer

participation in the creation of public policy, and national food security through the development of a localized food system that makes export agriculture secondary to food and fiber production for national consumption. This model of agrarian reform has emerged at the center of contemporary movements for social justice across the globe. In addition, it has informed national land and agricultural policy in progressive countries like Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia. In the words of Peter Rosset, "we are seeing the emergence of a new source of hope; of new dreams those of the largely nonviolent poor people's movements sidestepping government in action and taking matters firmly into their own hands."[82] Rehman Sobhan, in his work *Agrarian Reform and Social Transformation: Preconditions for Development*, distinguishes between two models of agrarian reform, (1) radical and (2) non-egalitarian.[83] For Sobhan, the difference between the radical and non-egalitarian models is largely determined by the "social origins" of the reform process, i.e., whether or not the movement for agrarian reform is informed and led by a broad base of farming communities from below or by political/economic elites from above and the capacity of the reforms to "bring within the compass all or a very large share of farmland and to redistribute this to all or a large proportion of agricultural households."[84] Given the similarities between the typologies explored above, we believe it is possible to summarize the types of agrarian reforms using Sobhan's categories (SC) as the basis for our synthesis.

Table 1.1 Sobhan's Typology of Agrarian Reform

Radical Agrarian Reform (SC)	*Non-Egalitarian Agrarian Reform (SC)*
Agrarian Reform From Below (RPC)	Market Lead Agrarian Reform (RPC)
Strongest Agrarian Reform (LPR)	Mild Agrarian Reform (LPR)
	Stronger Agrarian Reform (LPR)

Within the context of this project, agrarianism as a culture/lifestyle and agrarianism as a transformative socio-political process will be considered two sides of the same coin, i.e., agrarianism as a philosophy of human development. Now that we have developed a general definition of agrarianism, we will explore its significance to APT.

Agrarianism, the Urban Bias and APT

According to United Nations figures, "sometime in 2008 more people will live in cities than in rural areas. Over the past half-century, the world's urban population has increased nearly fourfold, from 732 million in 1950 to 3.15 billion in 2005. People living in cities accounted for 49 percent of the total population of 6.46 billion in 2005."[85] This trend towards urbanization is highest in the "developing world." Asia and Africa are expected to double their urban populations to 3.4 billion by 2030. Within the context of North America, more than half of its population lived in cities by 1950.[86] This is particularly important for African-American people who have historically been a highly urbanized population. In 2003, 58% of African Americans lived in cities. Given these historical trends, it is not difficult to understand why APT often focuses on urban

populations and urban social problems. It is important to consider, however, that the movement towards urbanization is a planned process and is under girded by a specific set of assumptions about human development. This perception is what we have previously labeled the urban bias. To reiterate its core assumptions, the urban bias assumes that urban life, mass consumption, and high levels of technological development are features of a developed society. In addition, it assumes that rural life is backwards, this includes rural culture on multiple levels, for example, language, social organization, rural knowledge, and work with a specific emphasis on farming. Although these core assumptions have informed APT, they find their origins in the development of western sociopolitical thought in the modern era.

A dominant feature of western socio-political thought and development philosophy is a commitment to the twin values of progress and unlimited growth. In simpler terms, this means that western culture is committed to a vision of the good life that assumes the following:

> 1. The quality of human life, in a given community, can be measured by the degree to which the vast majority of its population is removed from agricultural production specifically and rural life in a general sense.
>
> 2. The quality of human life in a given community can be measured by the degree to which its standard of living rises, i.e., its per capita rate of consumption of purchased goods and services.[87]

The urban bias, as a development philosophy, is connected to the early history of modernity and capitalist agricultural development. This is critical because much of what we understand about the history of African-American communities and APT is intimately linked to the evolution of American agriculture.

Capitalist agricultural production, as an economic development philosophy, is informed by two interrelated assumptions. The first is the notion of private property. The second is a scientific reductionist approach to knowing and its impact upon conceptions of socio-economic organization and agricultural production. Both are linked giving birth to the cultural vision we are calling the urban bias.

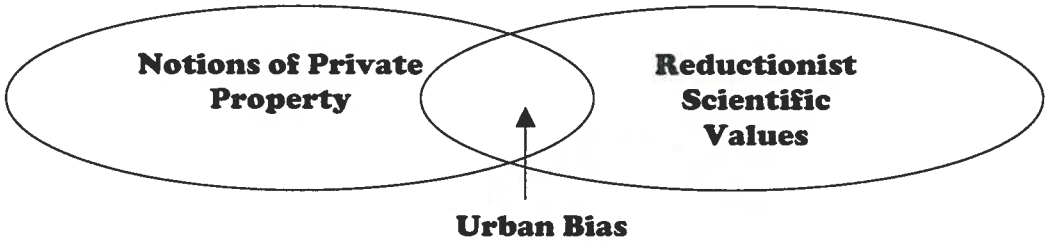

Figure 2. The Relationship between Notions of Private Property and Reductionist Scientific Values in the Formation of the Urban Bias.

The concept of *private property*, in the context of this discussion, is defined as the view that land, water, biodiversity, and knowledge can be controlled, purchased, and sold by individuals and/or social classes in a given society. Privatization excludes others for the purpose of accumulating material wealth, political power, and prestige. According to Vandana Shiva, multiple forms of socioeconomic relationships emerge to support the goals associated with privatization. This includes (1) the physical elimination of common property regimes, (2) private land ownership, (3) an emphasis on export agricultural production to the exclusion of the localization of food, fiber, and energy production, (4) the elimination of social values, which assume that food security, equal access to healthcare, access to work, and full participation in decision making processes are basic human rights as opposed to commodities driven by the market, and (5) the

creation of the legal and coercive means to maintain a socio-economic system to support the previous assumptions.[88]

In Western Europe, during the 16th and 17th centuries, the process known as enclosure successfully created both the philosophical and legal justification for the appropriation of land by the few for the express purpose of the creation of what is called private property and economic growth in a contemporary sense. The commons, which once supported rural communities in England for instance, were removed from the control of peasant communities and put in the hands of individuals who were members of the growing merchant class based in cities and/or members of the former landed aristocracy from Europe's feudal era. This process, according to Ellen Wood, was responsible for what she describes as the agrarian roots of capitalism. Parallel to the enclosure movement, an *improvement philosophy* emerged arguing that values associated with the commons arrested economic, technological, and by extension, human development and progress.

> From the standpoint of improving landlords and capitalist farmers, land had to be liberated from any such obstruction to their productive and profitable use of property. Between the 16th and 18th centuries, there was growing pressure to extinguish customary rights that interfered with capitalist accumulation. This could mean various things: disputing communal rights to common lands by claiming exclusive private ownership; eliminating various use rights on private land; or challenging the customary tenures that gave many smallholders rights of possession without unambiguous legal title.[89]

This process, on the other hand, was not uniform, globally speaking. The conditions under which it developed in Western Europe were fundamentally different from socio-historical processes taking place in farming communities of color around the world. This

is not to suggest that conflict over wealth did not exist in indigenous societies. What it does suggest, however, is that the rapid conversion from the concept of the commons to private property was historically unique, so to speak, to Western Europe. According to Vandana Shiva, out of this movement emerged a clear set of values that defined human development within a specific context:

> 1. Nature is uncreative, unproductive and valueless until exploited as "raw material" for industry.
>
> 2. Cultures and knowledge systems that build on nature's creativity are also uncreative, unproductive and valueless.
>
> 3. There is no knowledge, no economy, no culture, and no rights prior to the establishment of industrial civilization. They gain value only as raw material for industrial civilization.[90]

Improvement philosophy, subsequently, would inform early American political philosophy. It is not surprising then, that agrarianism was considered reactionary by personalities like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. According to Govan, Thomas Jefferson, "in 1813, praised the American Congress because it had provided protection well against the agrarian and plundering enterprises of the majority of people."[91] He goes on to argue that, "through the remaining years of the 19th century, most Americans used the word agrarian as a disparaging epithet, usually descriptive of those who would subvert the existing property structure."[92] More importantly, improvement philosophy, in a hierarchical fashion, relegated small farming communities to the lowest rung of human development. Hence the common view that peasant society is less developed than societies geared towards commercial and industrial production. Modernization theory, in

all of its variants, is a logical extension of improvement philosophy. Modern, conservative, liberal, and radical scholars alike, share the improvement ethic. Conservative economic historian Ronald Seavoy clearly and honestly describes this view in his book *Subsistence and Economic Development.* We will quote him at length to illustrate this point.

> The focus of commercialization policies must be extinguishing institutions and customary laws that sanction subsistence agriculture. Economic development, as applied to peasant nations, means increasing per capita production of all goods and services for sale on anonymous markets. The purpose of increased production for market sale is to increase consumption because economic development assumes that material abundance is socially desirable. Material abundance means ample food housing clothing health services and longevity for persons who are motivated to labor for money. Initiating the process of economic development requires that governing elites of developing nations commit themselves to adopting policies to increase national wealth faster than population increase. The commitment to increase national wealth must precede economic policies and this commitment must be defined and enforced by political power. Political power, not economic policy, is the propellant of economic development. Policies prescribed by development economists have failed to commercialize food production because they assume that all humans are motivated to earn money incomes, that productivity is limited by lack of technology, lack of credit, and labor constraints. All four assumptions are wrong. *Peasants prefer indolence more than enjoying an abundance of goods and services that money can purchase.* Money acquisition in excess of subsistence needs is a low priority because additional labor is necessary to acquire it.[93]

Less overt than Seavoy in his dehumanization of peasant cultures, liberal economic historian Walter Rostow, in his text *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto,*[94] argues that, "it is possible to identify all societies, in their economic dimensions, as lying within one of five categories: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass-consumption."[95] For Rostow, a society moves in a linear fashion, progressively through

each stage, achieving higher levels of material productivity. Mass consumption is perceived as the pinnacle of the five stages, and peasant culture, referred to as traditional society, is associated with the first and most primitive stage. Marx and Engels, the fathers of modern, radical political economy in the western tradition, also share this view of peasant cultures through the lens of historical materialism. For Marx and Engels, all societies go through five, progressive stages of growth defined by the development of the productive forces (1) primitive communalism, (2) slavery, (3) feudal society (4) capitalist society and (5) communist society.[96] Primitive communalism is synonymous with peasant cultures in this instance. For Marx and Engels, what distinguishes capitalist and communist society from its predecessors is the degree to which they have evolved away from peasant cultures, hence the emphasis on working communities in the urban, industrial sectors. Primitive communalism, particularly the Asian and African form, is socially organized along collective lines, due to the "low level of the productive forces." In other words, collective social relations exist in primitive, communal societies because without them, humans would not be able to survive, given the low level of technological development. As technology advances, a surplus is produced giving birth to the development of classes within human communities. This process begins with the emergence of slave society and moves progressively towards capitalism. The appearance of feudal and capitalist society is characterized by advances in technology and by extension, greater efficiency in the production of surplus. For Marx and Engels, inequality in the distribution of wealth, and the resultant forms of oppression that surface, serve as necessary preconditions for the progressive development of society, hence class

struggle as the motive force of human history.[97] Communist society, the last and final stage of development, emerges and benefits from both the collective social values of primitive communalism and the advances in technology progressively developed during the slave, feudal, and capitalist stages. For this reason, radical western political economy is often associated with "modernist ideologies." Although it has been critical of modernization theory in its liberal, capitalist form,[98] radical political economy shares some of its core assumptions.

> In classical socialism, peasants were viewed as relics of an obsolete mode of production and designated for transformation into a rural working class producing on collective farms owned and managed by the state. In the different varieties of capitalist ideology, efficiency in agricultural production could only be brought about with the radical reduction of the numbers of peasants and the substitution of labor by machines. In both visions the peasant had no future.[99]

Given the modernist view of the peasantry and the degree to which it has informed contemporary development models, two questions logically arise. The first, are human communities better off because they have followed this development model? The second, to what degree has this view of peasant culture informed the study of African-American Rural and Farming Communities (AARFC) generally speaking and in the process, shaped the way APT has engaged the relevance of AARFC?

Practical Problems with the Urban Bias

Upon closer examination, two clear problems emerge with the urban bias. The first is the promise of material abundance and social stability that states of the global South aspired to after following the modernist path has yet to be achieved. In fact, the opposite seems to be true. According to the United Nations' *2007 Human Development Report*, half of

the world, close to three billion people, live on less than one dollar a day. In addition, more than 80% of the world's population lives in countries where the gap between rich and poor is progressively widening. Currently, 20% of the world's population control's three quarters of the globe's wealth, and it is heavily concentrated in the developed nations of Western Europe and North America. Conversely, poverty is concentrated in the rural areas of both the developed North and the underdeveloped South. The vast majority of the world's rural population lives in Asia, Latin America, and Africa.[100] If you couple these facts with our previous discussion on the state of the earth, a clear picture of social and environmental instability becomes apparent. Those critical of modernization theory, in its capitalist form, including dependency theorists, world systems theorists, and Black radicals in the tradition of APT, would suggest that the problem lies in unequal power relations. That is to say there is an unequal relationship between core capitalist states, where consumption is high and power is centralized and periphery states where consumption is low and power within the context of the global socioeconomic order is weak and fragile. Hence there is a global division of land and labor where periphery, predominantly rural states serve as cheap sources of raw materials and human labor that will be consumed and used by core, predominantly urban states. Oddly enough, the problem with this analysis is that it is not a "truly materialist" conception of the world. In other words, the focus remains on the economy, i.e., the social relations of production (unequal distribution of wealth, power, technology, etc.), to the exclusion of humanity's relationship to the natural world. That is to say human socio-historical development is extracted out of the earth's history and its predetermined

ecological processes. This is the second problem associated with the urban bias. Another way to state this issue is to suggest that modern conceptions of development, across the ideological spectrum, are straight jacketed by the paradigm of political economy. For this reason, it is important to consider a new concept emerging out of the field of political ecology, *ecological footprint*.

Those attempting to address current concerns over climate change and sustainable development use ecological footprint, as a tool of analysis, across multiple disciplines. Global Footprint Network defines ecological footprint in the following manner:

> a measure of how much biologically productive land and water an individual, population or activity requires to produce all the resources it consumes and to absorb the waste it generates using prevailing technology and resource management practices. The Ecological Footprint is usually measured in global hectares. Because trade is global, an individual or country's footprint includes land or sea from all over the world. Ecological Footprint is often referred to in short form as *footprint*.[101]

To fully understand the significance of the footprint concept, one must take into consideration that the resources on planet earth are fixed; however, they are not evenly distributed across the globe. Southern states, along the equator for instance, are more biologically diverse than states above 40 degrees north parallel, for instance, the developed states of the North. The term used to describe the earth's fixed resources in relationship to human economies is *biocapacity*. Biocapacity is "the capacity of ecosystems to produce useful biological materials and to absorb waste materials generated by humans, using current management schemes and extraction technologies."[102] A given state's economy is naturally limited by the biocapacity of its geographical location. It can expand its biocapacity by (1) out migration and/or

colonization of new territories, (2) the more efficient use of its resources through improvements in extraction, manufacturing and waste disposal technologies, and (3) the development of trade relationships with other territories. The "natural limits" of a given state's economy determines, to a large extent, on its consumption habits. If one links ecological footprint to the current realities associated with the global division of land and labor, an interesting picture emerges.

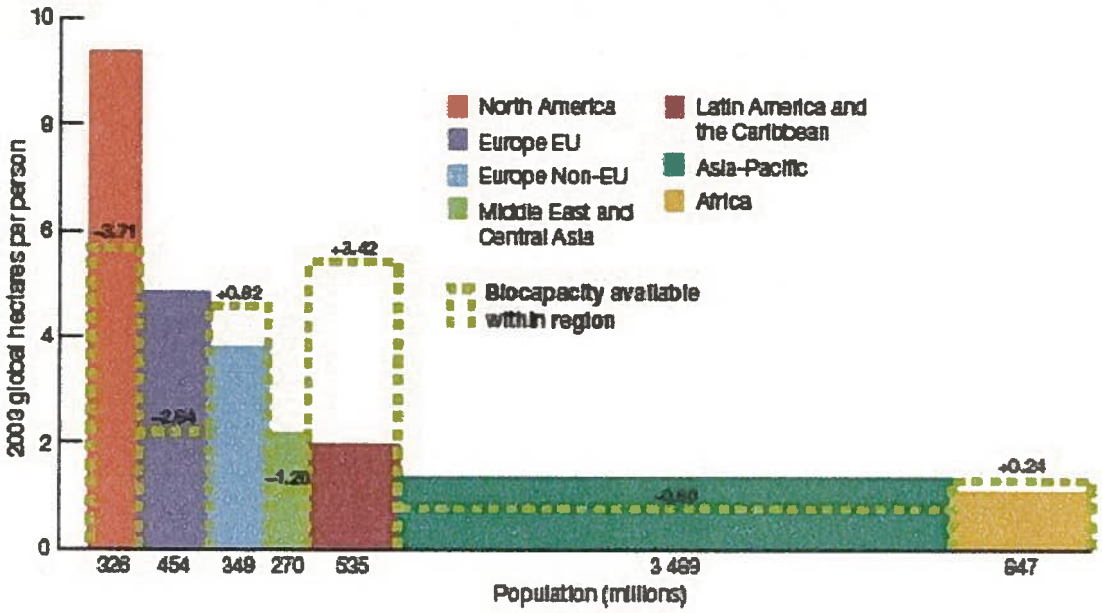

Figure 3. Ecological Footprint of Regions of the World.

Figure 3 illustrates that the ecological footprint of Northern populations is profoundly larger than populations of the South. On average, a person in North America (population 326 million) needs approximately 9.5 hectares to maintain current consumption patterns. The European Union (population 454 million) is a distant second

with an average of 5 hectares per person. Conversely in Asia, including China and India (population approximately 3.5 billion), on average, a person uses 1.5 hectares to maintain current consumption patterns, and a person in Africa (population 847 million) on average uses 1 hectare. The simple truth is that the vast majority of the world's people, who live in the global South, consume far less than the smaller populations who live in North America and Western Europe. At the same time, however, the earth's resources are naturally limited.

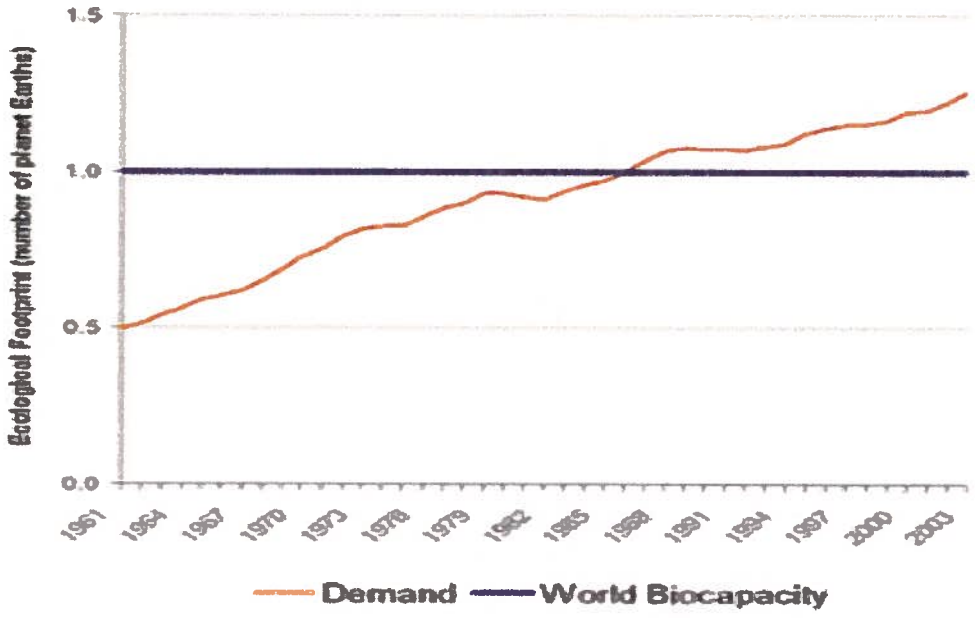

Figure 4. World Demand in Relationship to World Biocapacity.

Figure 4 illustrates that although consumption rates are unevenly distributed across populations and states, the collective demand on the earth's natural resources exceeded its biocapacity between the years 1988-1991. Exceeding biocapacity is associated with the term *overshoot*. Overshoot occurs when human demand on the earth's

resources "exceeds the biosphere's supply or regenerative capacity. Such overshoot leads to a depletion of earth's life supporting natural capital and the build up of waste,"[103] hence declining mammal species, the rapid loss of plants life and forest cover, the depletion of fossil fuel reserves, the depletion of fish stocks, and so on. In addition, we must remember that ecological footprint measures both consumption and waste production. Just as wealth and consumption is unevenly distributed across states and populations, waste disposal is unevenly distributed across populations and states as well, in reverse order, however. This means that the global South disproportionately bears the burden of serving as sites for waste disposal by the North. In short, the South absorbs the trash, too often toxic, of the North. As Robert Bullard argues,

> Consumption and production patterns, especially in nations with wasteful "throw away" lifestyles as the United States, in the interests of transnational corporations create and maintain unequal and unjust waste burdens within and between affluent and poor communities, states, and regions of the world. Shipping hazardous waste from rich communities to poor communities is not a solution to the growing global waste problem. The practice is a manifestation of power arrangements in a larger stratification system where some people in some places are assigned greater value than others.[104]

Naturally, the question arises in a world where (1) biological resources are limited, (2) human consumption habits have exceeded that limit, and (3) consumption and waste disposal rates are unevenly distributed across populations and states, is it materially possible for those states and populations who consume less to *catch up*, with those states and populations that consume more? The answer is a resounding no! It is not achievable; therefore, modernist conceptions of unlimited economic growth are false simply because it is not materially possible for all people to consume at the rates

commonly associated with developed states and populations. What is required is a new definition of development that takes into consideration the balance that must exist between human consumption rates and nature's capacity to reproduce itself.

Impact of the Urban Bias on APT and the Study of AARFC

Historically speaking, theories of development that have emerged to document and explore the unique culture, social movements and social problems of AARFC have been informed by three disciplines that loosely fall within the western social science tradition: political economy, environmentalism, and ethnography. In Peter Rosset's article, *Toward an Agroecological Alternative for the Peasantry*, the central challenge of contemporary rural development theories lies in the habit of examining the social problems of rural communities along a *single axis*.[105] Political economy, as a field, has dominated much of the discussion surrounding the problems of African-American farming communities and rural development. In its most progressive context, it is concerned with the impact of the rapid transformation of agricultural production in the United States and the tendency for land, capital, and decision making to be concentrated in the hands of large, white farmers and increasingly, multinational, agricultural corporations. Citing the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) as the principal state vehicles through which agricultural multinationals and large plantation owners maintain control over agricultural markets, financial capital, and agricultural research, those who view the problems of AARFC through the prism of political economy envisage solutions that advocate for the redistribution of land and wealth and the infusion of material and human resources into

rural areas using both liberal[106] and radical[107] development strategies. According to Rosset, the central weakness of political economy lies in the fact that solutions that only address socio-economic dimensions, without altering technology and scale of production, have not permitted us to understand the problems fully and by extension, have not permitted escape from the crisis.[108] In addition, a body of literature has developed to document and assess the impact of environmental racism[109] on rural African-American communities.

Historically speaking, the environmentalist paradigm, as it expresses itself through the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM), emerges as an outgrowth of both the Civil Rights Movement and the energy crisis in the 1970s, which provided a major impetus for the mainstream, white led environmentalist movement to embrace equity issues confronting the poor in this country and in countries in the Third World.[110] Historically, the EJM challenges the popular assumption that environmentalism is the purview of the white middle class and highlights the linkages that exist between race, class, and the disproportionate health and environmental risks faced by communities of color. Environmentalism as an approach, however, seems to only marginally address production practices as they impact both physical health and economic stability. In other words, to what degree might scale of production and the ever-increasing consumption habits of a given population impact environmental stability, human health and well-being? In many ways, the inability to explore this question fully can be linked to the absence of alternative socio-economic and production theories within contemporary APT. As Rosett argues, by only addressing environmental concerns, this approach offers little

hope of either reversing the rapid degradation of the resource base for future production or of resolving the current profit squeeze and debt trap in which African-American and small farming communities are caught.[111] In addition, a growing body of ethnographic literature is redeveloping in an effort to document the agricultural and environmental history of African-American farming and rural communities.[112] During the early part of the 20th century, attempts were made to assess the cultural development of AARFC. This effort was informed by the post-reconstruction values of white intellectuals, planters, agricultural extension agents and government officials who characterized African-American farmers as lazy, inefficient, and underdeveloped in an attempt to justify the continued existence and expansion of forced labor and plantation agriculture under the twin realities of the sharecropping system and legalized segregation. Ullrich Phillips, in his article *The Plantation as a Civilizing Factor*, argues that proper training and association with whites, through plantation life, would prepare African Americans for life as "free" men.[113] The new ethnographic literature attempts to counter the traditional, white southern view of African-American rural culture by suggesting that historically, African Americans maintained and recreated an autonomous ecological and agricultural knowledge base often in opposition to the ideological and production patterns of plantation agriculture. The central weakness of this approach, however, is its "descriptive" orientation. The culture of African-American farming and rural communities is studied in a "traditionalist" context, i.e., history as stagnant. Linkages are not often made between contemporary challenges, their historical development, existing cultural formations, and the emergence of new strategies to address current problems. In

contrast to the single axis approach, Rosset argues for the creation of a more holistic alternative paradigm based upon the pillars of fair prices for farmers, land redistribution, agroecological technology, and a greater emphasis on local production and basic needs, including support for urban agriculture.[114] What Rossett is describing as a "holistic paradigm," this project will associate with the agrarian development philosophy of La Via Campensina.

La Via Campensina (LVC): The Search for an Alternative

> The redistribution of land through comprehensive agrarian reform is a basic prerequisite for the kind of inclusive broad-based development that would allow nations to provide all of their citizens with a decent standard of living and make possible more ecologically sustainable management of natural resources. What is at stake is a model of development that is inclusive rather than exclusive.[115]

La Via Campesina (LVC) is a multinational, federation of peasant and small farmer organizations that formed in May 1993, in Mons, Belgium, largely in response to the growing concern, by peasants and small farmers over the impact of World Trade Organization (WTO) policies on the strength of agriculture and farming communities in their respective countries. La Via Campesina, Spanish for "peasant way" or "peasant road", was formed to challenge neo-liberalism and its various development strategies that encouraged land privatization, green revolution technologies, the corporatization of agricultural production, food dumping, and export agriculture to the detriment of local food security and the stability of small farming communities across the globe. LVC frequently participates in mass demonstrations against the WTO during its ministerial meetings, as well as broad based protest movements that challenge international finance capital in its various institutional forms, i.e., the World Bank, International Monetary

Fund IMF, and the Group of Eight. In addition, it is a visible, non-state, political actor at the World Food Summit convened by the International Food and Agricultural Organization. According to Annette Desmarais, LVC is a part of the radical social movement tradition in that it does not seek inclusion into the existing social order but rather seeks to engage in a "new culture of politics in an effort to create alternative identities, alternative social spaces, new solidarities and new political cultures."[116] One of the most striking features of LVC is its commitment to "weaving together organizations embedded in their own particular political, economic, social, and cultural contexts but still manages to establish unity within diversity."[117] LVC's membership encompasses organizations from both the North and South, divided into eight regions: East and Southeast Asia, South Asia, North America, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa.

La Via Campesina: An Agrarian Philosophy of Development

LVC stands upon the tradition of radical agrarian reform; however; it divides it into two, interrelated dimensions. The first is *genuine agrarian reform,* and the second is *integrated agrarian reform*. Genuine agrarian reform "ensures that those who work and live on the land secure tenure, have access to, and control the land and resources necessary for a dignified livelihood."[118] Integrated land reform "encompasses a cosmic vision of territory, space, water, biodiversity, and natural resources in order to establish harmony between human beings and Mother Nature."[119] It sees its vision as an alternative to the neo-liberal model of agriculture and rural development. Its stated principles include the following:

1. Those who work and live on the land have the right to land, water, forests and the resources required to live there with dignity and security.

2. Indigenous people have a right to their ancestral lands and territories.

3. All peoples have a right to produce their own food that is ecologically and culturally appropriate.

4. The earth and its resources are for all humanity, not commodities owned by the few whom own and control the capitalist market. Land has a social function.

5. Land, seeds, water, maritime resources, and biodiversity must be loved and protected, not exploited, degraded and destroyed. These are rightfully the resources of local communities.

6. The right to appropriate technology is fundamental.[120]

The notion of the peasant way or the peasant road implies that LVC places peasant and small farming culture at the center. That is to say that peasant cultures are of value in creating "new models" of social development and material production. However, this does not exclude the total "rejection of modernity or of technology and trade, accompanied by a romanticized return to an archaic past steeped in rustic tradition."[121] In fact, the LVC argues that "recapturing aspects of traditional, local, or farmers' knowledge, and combining that knowledge with new technology when and where it is appropriate" is desirable.[122] La Via Campesina's most popular contribution to rural based social movements is the concept of *food sovereignty*. The concept of food sovereignty means the following:

1. Placing priority on the production of healthy, good quality culturally appropriate food primarily for the domestic market. It is fundamental to maintain a food production capacity based on a system of diversified farmer based production; one that respects diversity, production capacity of the land, cultural values and preservation of natural resources, to guarantee the independence and the food sovereignty of populations.

2. Providing remunerative prices for farmers (men and women), which require the power to protect internal markets against imports at lower prices.

3. Regulating production on the internal market in order to avoid the creation of surpluses.

4. Stopping the process of industrialization of production methods and developing family farm-based sustainable production.

5. Abolishing all direct and indirect export aids.[123]

Although LVC's thrust is to address the social problems of peasant and small farming communities, it envisions itself as part of a broader process of social change, which includes but is not limited to the land question.

Consistent with Devon Pena's notion that "development of environmental justice perspectives on sustainable agriculture must begin with an understanding of and respect for the diverse experiences, cultural traits, and socio-economic positions of the different communities of color,"[124] we believe it is possible to use LVC's philosophy of the peasant road to explore the agrarian tradition within the context of AARFC and its expression within APT.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is as follows:

1. To delineate a theory of Africana Agrarianism and its relevance to contemporary African-American social movements specifically, the global African community in a general sense.
2. To create space within the fields of African-American Politics and Africana Studies that would allow for an increased awareness of the importance of an ecological, land-

based approach to the study of social problems within the African world.

3. To contribute to the maturity of a socially relevant, Africana environmental history and politics.

Research Questions

1. What constitutes Africana Agrarianism as a political philosophy and vision of cultural development? How can we understand the evolution of the Africana Agrarian Tradition (AAT) through the philosophy of the peasant road?
2. What are the contours of a political history of Africana Agrarianism within the context of African-American communities? How does this history inform our understanding of the development of African-American social movements?
3. How can we understand the political objectives and development goals of contemporary social movement organizations concerned with the conditions of African-American farming and rural communities through the philosophy of the peasant road?
4. What broad-based contemporary social problems, relevant to African-American communities, can be more meaningfully understood through the re-centering of the land question? What are its implications for APT?

Research Methodology

This is a theoretical dissertation. The central objective is to develop a new model to look at the historical and sociopolitical development of AARFC. In addition, we hope to demonstrate how this new model can be used to clarify and inform the development of APT. According to Rudestam and Newton, theoretical dissertations must, "argue from

the literature that there is a different way of understanding a phenomenon that has heretofore been presented. Viable theoretical dissertations, in the social sciences, are those that bring together or integrate previously distinct areas."[125]

We have demonstrated that single axis models have hampered previous attempts to study AARFC, particularly within the context of APT. Vandana Shiva echoes this criticism in her call for models that prioritize "contextual causation as opposed to linear causation."[126] This is essentially an argument for an interdisciplinary project. For this reason, the methodological framework for this dissertation will unfold in two principle areas. The first area seeks to develop the theoretical basis for Africana Agrarianism through an examination of AARFC, using the lens of LVC's genuine and integrated agrarian reform model, for example, the peasant road. LVC's genuine and integrated agrarian reform model is founded upon the interdisciplinary traditions of political ecology and agroecology. Both traditions will be used to rethink the historical evolution of AARFC. An attempt will be made to extract a clear development philosophy that can also be used to analyze contemporary issues and social movement organizations within the AARFC experience.

The second area seeks to perform a qualitative, multiple case study of contemporary social movement organizations and select social problems within AARFC. According to Jean Hartley, the strength of case studies lies in,

1. their capacity to explore social processes as they unfold in organizations.
2. their capacity to explore social processes in their organizational and environmental context.
3. their ability to explore new processes or behaviors or ones which are little

understood.their ability to play an important function in generating hypotheses and building theory.

4. their ability to capture emergent and immanent properties of life in organizations.

5. their functionality in cross-national research, where an intimate understanding of what concepts mean to people, the meanings attached to particular behaviors and how behaviors are linked.[127]

Specific emphasis will be placed upon the sixth strength of case studies according to Hartley. Three specific data collection strategies will be used: (1) historical analysis, (2) focus groups, and (3) document collection and review. The strategies will be driven by an analysis that seeks to explore the development praxis of the organizations in question and the causes, historical development, and contours of the social problems chosen. Interview questions for the organizational case studies will evolve from four core areas that collectively represent the six principles associated with LVC's genuine and integrated agrarian reform model: (1) historical/cultural context, (2) localization of production, (3) land retention, reform and use, and (4) socio-political organization. Within each area, a series of open-ended questions will be posed to (1) explicate the development philosophy of the organization in question and (2) assess the degree to which their development vision and social analysis is aligned with LVC's genuine and integrated agrarian reform model.[128]

Organization of Study

This dissertation will unfold in three successive stages. Chapters 2 and 3, titled *Exploring the Africana Agrarian Tradition* Parts 1 and 2, will seek to explicate a cultural history of AARFC through the prism of the peasant road. We will explore its

implications for development theory and a political history of African-American rural social movements. Specific emphasis will be placed upon four themes, (1) an overview of pre-colonial African agrarian culture (AAC) through the lens of political ecology and agroecology as a basis for rethinking Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* and George Ayittey's *Indigenous African Institutions*, (2) an exploration of the impact of plantation agriculture and the American state upon AAC, (3) a political and environmental history of Africana Agrarianism in the United States; exploring significant moments, personalities, communities and tendencies within the African-American agrarian tradition (AAAT), and (4) an overview of the contemporary conditions of AARFC. Chapter 4, titled *In the Tradition: Exploring the Political and Development Philosophy of African-American Agrarian Social Movement Organizations*, will be a multiple case study of three contemporary organizations engaged in social justice work around the land question. An attempt will be made to analyze their political vision through LVC's genuine and integrated agrarian reform model and to categorize their development philosophy and practice based upon Sobhan's typology of agrarian reform. Chapter 5, the conclusion, will attempt to outline the contours of Africana agrarianism as a political philosophy and its implications for APT. Specific emphasis will be placed upon identifying emerging social problems and movements that speak to the importance of the land question and the peasant road.

Delimitations of Study

Although this is essentially a theoretical dissertation, the collection of primary data, through case studies of contemporary social movement organizations, is an

important component of this project. However, given the time, material and geographic constraints of this process, the organizational case study component will be limited to organizations functioning in the state of Georgia. This is an important limitation given that one of the central goals of the dissertation is to survey existing social movement organizations committed to agrarian based social change. In the future, however, this project will be expanded to include Africana agrarian organizations across both the continental United States and internationally. This will help expand our understanding of the Africana agrarian tradition within the context of APT.

ENDNOTE

CHAPTER 1

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[21] Parker, Orozco, and Wilson, National Urban, 21.

[22] Rashid Hasan, Robert Scholes, and Neville Ash, eds., *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2005), 1.

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CHAPTER 2

EXPLORING THE AFRICANA AGRARIAN TRADITION:

RE-ENVISIONING AFRICAN PRE-COLONIAL SOCIO-CULTURAL FORMATIONS

> Intrinsic in the writing of history is the need to structure the past, to create consistent, systematic, and orderly classifications of time. Periodization, or the dividing of the past into coherent chucks of time is the main heuristic device used by historians to study societies, people, and events. The function of periodization schemas is to create meaning, to impose order on the past by explicitly comparing and contrasting, and relating and distinguishing one historical moment from another.[1]
>
> *Se wo were fina wo sankofa, a yenkyi* (There is nothing wrong with learning from hindsight.)[2]

Introduction

All political philosophies contain within themselves preconceived notions of what it means to be a human being and by extension, what constitutes human development. For Roger Eatwell, all political philosophies "possess a set of attributes, an overt or implicit set of empirical and normative views, which are goal oriented about (1) human nature, (2) the process of history, and (3) the nature of socioeconomic and political arrangements.[3] Consistent with this framework, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how the *peasant way* can be used as a political philosophy to give insight into our understanding of the historical and socio-political development of AARFC and AARFC social movements.

Historically speaking, approaches to the study of Africana agrarian cultures has largely been shaped by what we can describe as *modernist ideologies*. Inherent within the modernist approach is the assumption that human communities are "more developed" as they advance in a linear fashion, away from peasant modes of production and social organization. In an almost unquestioned fashion, this movement from the countryside to the city has been a defining feature of the modern era, i.e., the *urban bias*. In addition, this progression is almost always associated with increasing the consumption habits of the given migratory population. In light of contemporary concerns over climate change, global economic instability, and the pervasiveness of social and economic insecurity at the local level, the peasant way seeks to reconsider the modern way. Potentially, this has profound implications for how we understand the historical development of African societies and contemporary social problems within the African world. More specifically, this is a significant *paradigm shift* from how APT has traditionally approached the study of pre-colonial Africa and AARFC.

The Modernist Way: Considering Pre-Colonial Africa

An examination of pre-colonial Africa is significant given that AARFC emerges out of the "sub-soil" of Africana agrarian cultures prior to the Maafa.[4] Its historical presence is profound; consequently, it has been the subject of multiple studies within the tradition of APT. It is also important to consider the modernist impact upon APT"s approach to the study of pre-colonial Africana agrarian cultures. Its philosophical influence is both far reaching and in an all too familiar way, restrictive. We will illustrate this through an analysis of two seminal works in the tradition of APT and African

historiography, Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa and* George Ayittey's *Indigenous African Institutions*. Ayittey's and Rodney's work are being used specifically because of where they can be located, ideologically speaking, along the APT spectrum. Rodney is considered by most to be the quintessential scholar activist committed to the Pan-Africanist agenda and socialism. Ayittey is an economist at American University and a former fellow of the conservative Hoover Institution and Heritage Foundation. As founder and president of the Free Africa Foundation, he is an unapologetic advocate of the free market system for Africa.

A central goal of Walter Rodney's landmark study, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, was to formulate a theoretical basis for "reconstructing the nature of development in Africa before the coming of Europeans."[5] For Rodney, it is important to consider that "Africa developed unevenly over the course of its pre-colonial history."[6] Using a Marxist framework to both define development and to describe the stages associated with Africa's development, Rodney suggests that it is necessary to study pre-colonial Africa in an effort to gain an appreciation for its "dialectical evolution from lower to higher forms of social organization."[7] For Rodney, cultural formations like ancient Egypt, Nubia, Ethiopia, Great Zimbabwe, and the Western Sudanic states of Ghana, Mali and Songhai are examples of higher forms of social organization within the African context. In an attempt to modify the orthodox historical materialist development model, Rodney offers a view of what he describes as the *African path* of development.[8] The African path is characterized by the following principles:

1. Pre-colonial Africa was fundamentally a communal society characterized by no classes, equal access to land, and equality in distribution.[9]

2. Agrarian societies were the norm in pre-colonial Africa.[10]

3. Kinship served as the basis for organizing labor and wealth distribution, as well as social and material security and stability.[11]

4. Beyond kinship groups, age sets served as an alternative framework to unite extended family systems across bloodlines. In turn, this became a more effective way to mobilize labor and by extension, advance the productive capacity of pre-colonial African societies.[12]

5. African societies were characterized primarily by household production that was subsistence oriented. Local/regional trade was the rule; long distance trade was the exception.[13]

For Rodney, the African path did not follow the orthodox Marxist trajectory from primitive communalism to communism. Africa's development remained principally within the communal stage. Only in rare circumstances, i.e., the cases of Ethiopia and the Maghreb, did Africa move towards what could be described as a "transitional phase between communal and feudal society.[14] This echoes Samir Amin's notion of the tributary state. From this view, a logical question emerges: what was responsible for this "persistent brake to developing towards the feudal mode?"[15]

A key factor responsible for the rapid development of the productive forces in Western Europe was the "secularization of life."[16] Consistent with the modernist

perception of Africa, pre-colonial cultural formations were overwhelmingly dominated by religious thinking. For Rodney, "religion expresses a low-level understanding of the material world."[17] Religion served as an indomitable barrier towards the continued development of the productive forces. A logical extension of this view is that Africa's agricultural knowledge, technically speaking, was not as advanced as those systems in Asia and Europe.[18]

> This secularization of life *speeded up the development* of capitalism and socialism. In contrast, in the period before the coming of the whites, religion pervaded African life just as it pervaded life in other pre-feudal societies such as those of the Maoris of Australia or the Afghans of Afghanistan or the Vikings of Scandinavia.[19]

Unlike feudal Europe, religious thinking, coupled with the widespread distribution of land in pre-colonial Africa, discouraged the growth of antagonistic class relationships necessary for advancing the development of the productive forces according to Marxist theory. For Rodney, "antagonistic class contradictions" did not exist in communal Africa.[20] Where social stratification and/or socio-economic conflict did appear, it was usually a function of (1) the existence of caste systems that rigidly located individuals within specific industries, for example, leather workers, weavers, and farmers based upon blood lines, (2) conflict between age sets, particularly elders and young adults, or (3) the historic conflict between pastoralists and agriculturalist.[21] These conflicts, however, were non-antagonistic in nature. Although pre-colonial Africa's agricultural knowledge remained behind developments taking place in Asia and Europe, its manufacturing capacity was on par and in many cases, more advanced. The gold mines of Wagadu, the bronze smiths of Benin, cotton textiles made along the Guinea coast, copper production

in Katanga and Zambia, and iron tools from present-day Sierra Leone rivaled in quality manufactured goods coming from outside the continent. At the level of scale, however, Africa remained well behind its international competitors. For the most part, manufacturing in Africa did not progress beyond the cottage industry model. For Rodney, this was another break towards the development of a full-blown feudal society.

Long distant trade relationships spawned the movement in pre-colonial Africa towards Rodney's notion of the *transitional phase*. Long distance trade was concentrated primarily in non-agricultural products such as salt, copper, and gold. In addition, markets were more or less funded and driven by forces external, not internal, to pre-colonial African states. In the case of Great Zimbabwe, "Arab traders as far south as Sofala in the Mozambique channel, spurred Zimbabwe to mine more gold for export."[22] In the case of the Western Sudanic states, capital for the trans-Saharan trade was provided by the "merchants of Fez, Tlemecen and other cities in the Maghreb," arguably heavily influenced and controlled by Arab communities.[23] With the expansion of long distance trade routes, as well as wars of expansion and conquest, the "style of life of the African ruling classes became noticeably different."[24] Most often, they did not engage directly in the production of goods and services associated with the subsistence economy. Through the taxing of imported goods, as well as exacting tribute from member communities, hereditary monarchies evolved and entrenched themselves moving closer to full blown feudalism, hence the concept of a transitional phase.

For Ayittey, Rodney's transitional phase is a misnomer. It can be more accurately described as a burgeoning *bounded capitalism*. Unlike Rodney, Ayittey argues that

socialists and African nationalist scholars have distorted our understanding of pre-colonial African societies. In particular, the conception of a "communal Africa" is problematic. It suggests, erroneously, that all forms of property are held in common. In addition, it supports the myth that African societies did not promote the accumulation of individual wealth, i.e., the profit motive was not a driving force behind African development prior to the coming of the European. For Ayittey, pre-colonial African socio-economic formations have the following characteristics:

1. Although land could not be bought or sold, the factors of production were privately owned and/or controlled by kinship groups, for example, tools, land, seed, livestock, homes, storage, etc.[25] Using contemporary economic nomenclature kinship groups can be more appropriately understood as "corporate entities."[26]

2. Pre-colonial African state systems did not regulate agricultural or manufacturing activity; producers determined production practices along with the consumer demands of local and long distance trade, i.e., "the market." Free trade was the engine for economic growth.[27]

3. The state in pre-colonial Africa did not own land. What is most often assumed to be crown land and/or the property of the state was in fact either one of two things: (a) the lineage property of the ruling kinship group and/or (2) land held in trust by the governing lineage to be distributed to immigrants or expanding extended families.[28]

4. The market system evolved in pre-colonial Africa because traditional subsistence did not take care of all household consumption needs.[29]

5. Wealth held by kinship groups is not uniform hence socio-economic differentiation exists within pre-colonial African societies. Having wealth is considered a virtue and evidence of hard work. Wealthy members of society were considered model community members; therefore, they had considerable moral and political influence.[30] The wealthy, in most tribal systems, are not required to share their wealth equally with all members of the extended family.[31]

Pre-colonial Africa's free-market system was bounded because "the pursuit of wealth occurred within the context of certain socio-religious boundaries. The individual's pursuit of wealth could not undermine the integrity of the clan."[32] In religious terms, this was associated with the idea that the land was sacred and that the true landowners were the ancestors. In social terms, it was taboo for an individual to pursue "prosperity at the expense or injury of his kinsmen; however, there were no such prohibitions against exploitation of other tribesmen."[33] When the redistribution of wealth did take place, it was not mandated by the state but the choice of the wealthy, encouraged by a sense of responsibility to contribute to "the family pot[34] and their less fortunate kinsmen."[35]

For Ayittey, pre-colonial African agricultural production and manufacturing was as diverse and vibrant as the continent itself. African agricultural methods were complex and developed to respond to both subsistence and market oriented needs. This diversity expressed itself in the inventiveness associated with farming practices created and adapted to the wide variety of microclimates associated with the African continent as well as the thousands of wild plants domesticated by African farmers for household,

medical, and commercial use. Consistent with Rodney, Ayittey suggests that the guild system was the dominant mode of manufacturing in pre-colonial Africa.

> Craftsman, artisans, goldsmiths, blacksmiths produced all types of goods in Africa. In many communities, the craftsman organized themselves into guilds. Craft guild production and guild organizations reached their greatest development among the Nupe, Hausa, Yoruba and Benin. There were guilds of carpenters, masons, woodworkers, potters, weavers, glassmakers, iron ore miners, blacksmiths, brasssmiths and silversmiths.[36]

For Ayittey, the market was a central feature of pre-colonial African society. Market systems in Africa took on two basic forms (1) village based markets and (2) integrated, regional markets.[37] The existence of the trading profession is an indication that the profit motive permeated pre-colonial African societies. As brokers of palm oil, salt, rice, ivory, gold, cloth, and tobacco to name a few, traders "kept accounts in their heads and analyzed how price differences between markets offered opportunities."[38] Speculation was commonplace. Most often, African women controlled markets, and men, given the danger associated with traveling, controlled long distance trade. Market activity produced a number of social and economic benefits. First, market activity provided a context for people to supplement what could not be produced at the household level as well as a place to trade surplus.[39] Second, it served as a medium for social and political exchange as well as the transfer of news and information relevant to the community. Third, it functioned as an integrative force that encouraged sharing, on multiple levels, for example, technological, linguistic, medical, and political levels across ethnic lines.[40] Finally, markets were sites associated with important religious activities that bonded the community together in a moral, social, and economic context.[41] Generally speaking, pre-

colonial African markets were not rigidly and centrally controlled by the state through the chieftaincy.[42] Production guilds, market women, long distance traders, and consumers determined prices based upon "the normal forces of supply and demand." [43] The tradition of price haggling is a logical expression of this reality. Although periodic attempts by the pre-colonial African state were made to tax imported goods, the existence of alternative routes, the autonomy of market women and traders, as well as the complete independence of producers from state control made market regulation virtually impossible. In summary Ayittey argues,

> It hardly constitutes an exaggeration to assert that the marketplace was the heart of indigenous African society. It was the center of not only economic activity but also political, social, judicial and communication as well. Perhaps the most pernicious punishment that could be inflicted on an African society was to destroy its market, as this would *assail its inner sanctum.*[44]

The Peasant Way: Reconsidering Pre-colonial Africa

Although valuable in many respects, the central weakness of Rodney and Ayittey's approach to understanding development in pre-colonial Africa is the modernist path's penchant to consider human development absent of an ecological analysis. As we argued earlier in this discussion, the focus, most often, remains on the economy, i.e., the *social relations* of production to the exclusion of humanity's relationship to the natural world; that is to say human socio-historical development is extracted *out of the earth's history* and its predetermined ecological processes. To have an appreciation for this, it is necessary to outline the core features associated with the peasant way within a pre-colonial African context. First let us reiterate LVC's conception of the peasant way in general terms:

1. The peasant way encompasses a cosmic vision of territory, space, water, biodiversity and natural resources in order to establish harmony between human beings and Mother Nature.[45]
2. Land, sea, water, maritime resources, and biodiversity must be loved and protected, not exploited, degraded, and destroyed. These are rightfully the resources of local communities.[46]
3. Land has a social function. The Earth and its resources are for all humanity not commodities owned by the few.[47]
4. Those who work and live on the land have the right to land, water, forests, and the resources required to live there with dignity and security.[48]
5. The democratization of the means of production through cooperatives, social ownership, and/or family farm agriculture.[49]
6. The marketplace gives priority to local food markets for food.[50]
7. The experience and knowledge of peasants in using local resources is invaluable and must be preserved.[51]
8. Appropriate technology is fundamental.[52]

From these core principles, we are able to *recenter the land question* in a manner that allows us to paint a clearer picture of pre-colonial African socioeconomic formations. In doing so, it helps us to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses associated with the works of Rodney and Ayittey, given their modernist tendencies.

Any attempt to develop an understanding of pre-colonial African societies and agroecological knowledge must not ignore the inherent challenges that emerge when attempting to generalize about diverse, complex, cultural systems. First and foremost, peasant societies in general, Africa in particular, are often misunderstood and/or denigrated. Susan Hecht in her discussion *The Evolution of Agroecological Thought* suggests that three interrelated historical processes have contributed to this trend,

> Three historical processes have done much to obscure and denigrate the agronomic knowledge that was developed by local peoples and non-western societies: (1) the destruction of the means of encoding, regulating and transmitting

> agricultural practices; (2) the dramatic transformation of many non-western indigenous societies and the production systems on which they were based as a result of demographic collapse, slaving and colonial and market processes; and (3) the rise of positivist science. As a result there have been few opportunities for the insights developed in a more holistic agriculture to "filter up" into the formal scientific community. This difficulty is further compounded by unrecognized biases of agronomic researchers related to social factors such as class, ethnicity and gender.[53]

Second, Africa is indeed a large continent with a very dynamic history. Its ecological and social diversity has shaped the multiple ways in which African communities have attempted to organize their societies and to provide for its material needs. Equally so, it is important to also consider that an enduring, underlying "cultural unity" exists among African peoples from time immemorial. This underlying unity impacts all aspects of African culture, particularly its approach to agricultural production. Third, African societies share essential characteristics with other non-western, indigenous cultures and, generally speaking, pre-industrial societies. Despite all of this, however, it is possible to delineate a general set of core social, technological, and environmental characteristics associated with pre-colonial African agrarian cultures. Five core features characterize indigenous African agroecological systems:

1. Indigenous African communities viewed the earth as a living, concrete, yet *spiritual* reality. On multiple levels, this core principle was integrated into the *land ethic*[54] of the given community. It is safe to say that indigenous African cultures were predominantly rural based societies. Because of this, African systems of thought were "nature based" philosophical systems. Invariably, human beings were governed by the constraints and order associated with the Earth itself.

> In many African societies the Earth is a feminine, divine, nature principle, according to which society is organized. It is commonly seen as the abode of the ancestors, of which the livings are merely custodians. The living have a moral responsibility to maintain the earth for unborn generations to come and this obviously has positive ecological implications. In Africa many peoples see a transcendental oneness of the earth with the human community. The human community is seen as having an organic and symbiotic relationship with the land, so much so that in various African languages the same word is used to refer to land, people, family and community.[55]

The conflict between science and religion, as it expresses itself in Western Europe during the modern era, did not develop within indigenous communities in Africa prior to their integration into the international political economy on unequal terms in the late 15th century. What Rodney describes as "secularization" should not be accepted as a prerequisite to developing an intimate, sophisticated understanding of the material environment. From the perspective of African indigenous knowledge systems, there exists no distinction between the sacred and the secular. In fact, one can only understand the sacred through an ongoing engagement with the concrete, natural world. Kwame Agyei Akoto summarizes the implications of such a worldview on pre-colonial African conceptions of human nature,

> Humanity and all physical life forms are products of the union of the spirit as represented by Nyame (the creator) or the Abosom (forces of nature), and the material as represented by the Earth Asase Yaa . It is from the Earth that we acquire those materials that are necessary to sustain, nurture and develop our physical bodies, the material vessels or shrines of the spirit. It is in the context of the resources and physical environment provided by the Earth that the spirit of the human has the opportunity to actualize its personal mission and thereby facilitate its spiritual development and that of their families. Our linkage to the Earth is analogous to that of the child to the mother, and our interaction with, and our responsibility to Asase Yaa parallels that analogy. The Earth is defined in spirocyclic balance and reciprocity. A principle measure of the satisfaction of ones personal destiny is the extent to which human will and experience is in concert with the spirocyclic balance of the Earth. For our people, the forests,

> mountains, the caves, the springs, the rivers, the winds and sky are all entities or places where we commune with the deities and ancestors.[56]

Emerging from a conscious and deliberate merger between the sacred and the material, pre-colonial African societies developed a detailed ecological knowledge base. For instance, Ba-Kongo people possessed a very profound and extensive understanding of the earth and its developmental processes. According to Fukiau,

> In the eyes of the African people, especially those in touch with the teachings of the ancient African schools, the earth our planet, is *futu dia n'kisi diakanga Kalunga mu diambu dia moyo*- a satchet (parcel) of medicines tied up by *Kalunga* (the creator) for life on earth. This *futu* or *funda* contains everything that life needs for its survival: Medicines, food, drink, et cetera. The *futu* of medicines consists of chemicals actually known and unknown by man, which substances exist for one purpose only: life on earth.[57]

Futu, as a concept, is associated with understanding the earth as a container that holds something of great value. *Nkisi* is a term that is derived from the root word *kinsa*, a verb that means to take care of or "what takes care of life". *Nkisi* is synonymous with the term medicine. The contents of the *Futu* are usually associated with medicine. This includes foodstuffs, medicinal plants, trees, etc., grown and managed by farmers. The Dogon people of Mali, most known for their extensive astronomical knowledge, particularly of the Sirius star system, possessed a comparable body of information related to the earth, its evolution, and its relevance to human development. According to Marcel Griaule and Germaine Dieterlen,

> Having observed and studied everything within range of their perception, they have constructed an indigenous explanation of the manifestations of nature (anthropology, botany, zoology, geology, astronomy, anatomy, and physiology) as well as social facts (social structures, religious, political structures, craft arts, economy, etc). The Dogon possess "systems of signs or ideographs including

> several thousands, an astronomy and calendars, a numerical system, extensive physiological and anatomical knowledge, genetics and a systematic pharmacoepia. This knowledge encompasses the smallest twig and the tiniest animal; the spider, the worm and the dragonfly are considered of the same importance as the lion.[58]

What we want to suggest is that the orthodox Marxist supposition that a spiritual view of the world inherently inhibits the production of scientific knowledge is a false assumption. What is also important to consider is that human development, within the indigenous African context, is "not driven by bread alone." In other words, the material development of society is simply one aspect. The modernist development models of Marx and Rostow, embraced by Rodney and Ayittey respectively, does not fit neatly into the indigenous African worldview for this reason. Ayittey's presumption that accumulating wealth in pre-colonial African socioeconomic systems was bounded by certain socio-religious values does not properly underscore their role in reinforcing the view that human economies must develop within the natural constraints imposed by the natural environment, i.e., biocapacity. His analysis remains at the social level concerned primarily with mediating conflict between human beings during the process of socioeconomic exchange. For Rodney, the absence or presence of religion in the superstructure plays a significant role in the historical development of social formations. However, that role can arrest or advance the development of the society in question. Cleary, from the Marxist perspective, a religious view of the world is a burden, hence Rodney's position,

> The negative aspects usually arose out of the tendency for religion to persist unchanged for extremely long periods, especially when the technology of earning a living changes very slowly. This was the case in African societies, as in all other

> pre-capitalist societies. At the same time, the religious beliefs themselves react upon the mode of production, further slowing up progress in that respect.[59]

From an ecological perspective an indigenous, a spiritual view of the world can play a reciprocal role that *increases the productive capacity* of the society, while at the same time ensuring that non-human life forms are not negatively impacted by human consumption and production habits. Central to the land ethic of pre-colonial African societies is the notion that non-human living systems have the right to exist independent of their "use value" to humans. The Akan of present day Ghana envision the creator as the great spider, *Ananse Kokoroko*, who is the architect of the universe. The material from which the universe is constructed is the spider's web. All things, great and small, are connected to the web. What impacts one species, in turn, will impact the self-reproducing capacity of another. In addition, consistent with the traditional Akan week, Thursday, Yaoada in the Akan language, is considered the day that the Earth was born, hence "her name" Asase Yaa.[60] It is taboo for people to engage in farming on this day. Traditionally, it is a day to "let the earth rest." Inspired by Chief Seattle, leader of the indigenous nations Suquamish and Duwamish of the present day state of Washington, Vandana Shiva implores us to consider the implications of this assumption,

> "All things are connected," Chief Seattle tells us. We are connected to the earth locally and globally. Living cultures based on the recovery of our *earth identity* create the potential for reintegrating human activities into the earth's ecological processes and limits.[61]

2. Properly understood, the *commons* defined indigenous African land tenure systems. Consistent with Rodney's position, this assumes that provided one was responsible

socially, the use of land was a right, not a class privilege, as in the case of western systems of land tenure that are based upon private ownership.

> The primacy of agriculture in traditional economic life makes land *the most important* asset in these societies. It is therefore not surprising that it is highly valued with many rigid rules and rituals associated with it. As a rule land is vested in the descent groups and sometimes certain families. In centralized political systems what is not so vested is regarded as stool land and is entrusted to the king or chief who administers it on behalf of his people. The notion that land is *communal property* that should not be alienated is still generally mentioned. The traditional legal position is that the land is not actually owned by the present living members of the groups in whose name it stands. The living are only custodians who are expected to use it and then pass it on to the next generation.[62]

In what seems like ideological opportunism, Ayittey distorts the decentralized fashion in which the commons is organized in an effort to make the argument that communalism is a "misnomer and tends to obfuscate the general issue of property ownership"[63] in pre-colonial African societies. To show the deceptiveness of Ayittey's argument, it is important to consider that communism, in the modern period, is most often associated with state control of the means of production and distribution. What distinguishes the modern state from the peasant state is its organization. In other words, the modern state, in its liberal and communist form, is structured along socioeconomic class lines. Primary institutions such as the family no longer play an overt, conscious role in the organization and management of the modern state. One's ideological affiliation, i.e., political party, interest groups, or one's location within the socio-economic structure, for example, occupation in communist states or socioeconomic status in liberal-capitalist states, serves as the institutional basis through which the modern state functions. In pre-colonial Africa, however, kinship groups and age grades served as the primary social structures

through which political and labor relationships were organized and land was distributed. The collective belief that land belonged to the ancestors and was held in trust by the living for future generations, allowed for a non-coercive, decentralized approach to land distribution. Most often, expanding kinship groups or immigrant communities were given new land in perpetuity, provided there was enough idle land available and that it was used in an ecologically responsible manner. This usufruct approach to land distribution gave kinship groups a sense of closeness, self-sufficiency, and autonomy without violating *commons-centered* principles. In addition, it reinforced the belief that land has not only a material function but also a *social function.* Guein Montilus, in his text *Dopim,* provides us with a comprehensive, poetic analysis of the relationship between land, collective memory, social solidarity, and African spirituality. We will quote him at length to drive home this point.

> In African tradition, the social order begins with the occupation of the land inherited from the ancestor-founder of the lineage. This ancestral heritage is the actual soil where the Africans are born and raised, grow, and organize their own descent and immortality. This land is more than a birthplace, it is a living environment, the total environment which has witnessed rituals sacralizing birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, healing processes, and death. This land is truly a spiritual universe. In addition, this land includes the fields that provide the members of the extended family with subsistence and medical plants. There are also waters, hunting, pasture, and fishing lands, all belonging to a tradition of rights and powers left by the ancestors-founders of the lineage. Even the forest is integrated into this heritage, for in this mysterious space not only are there elements used to complete family subsistence needs, but there are also located ritual places for social or religious initiation, or others such as those secret societies. There are the trees with their material and symbolic importance. The use of all these spaces is a heritage received from the ancestors who set rules to follow. The ancestor's powers are immediately felt through this homeland. The village is also a part of this social order. Each village is formed by an agglomeration of extended families. However, the village is first of all a territory, each part of which has a name and a use determined by the forefathers and

> foremothers, sharing their understandings regarding human needs. The domestication of the village takes time. It implies the delineation of different spaces and their use. This gives to the village a corporate personality lived by all the inhabitants. This personality is rooted in a common history, religious references, political autonomy, and economic dependency. All the extended families of this territory form a micro-confederation bound together through destiny. Their life and their survival depend upon the cohesiveness of the community.[64]

In communal, pre-colonial African systems, land distribution was managed at the village level by an alliance of elder spiritual leaders associated with the "spirit of the earth." Among the Tallensi of northern Ghana for example, holders of this responsibility were called Tendanna.[65] Those communities whose political systems moved closer to the transitional phase, i.e., Asante (Akan), Oyo (Yoruba), and Great Zimbabwe (Shona) placed the responsibility of land distribution within the hands of families who were the original settlers of the land. Most often, hereditary monarchies of the African type, developed within these societies. As a rule, however, in both instances, land was distributed to heads of extended families that were responsible for redistributing land to their kinfolk. This preserved the decentralized, broad-based, communal character of pre-colonial African social formations. In addition, this is an important difference between African and European hereditary monarchies. Taking this into consideration, kinship groups can be more accurately described *not as corporate entities*, as Ayittey would suggest, but as *decentralized units of cooperative production* typical of the indigenous African state. The idea that all property was held in common, however, is a misnomer. As Ayittey suggest, the application of one's labor to the production process often determined what was private property and what was held in common.[66] Tools, homes, harvested produce, livestock, hunted animals, cloth, and other luxury items traded or paid for in local currencies at local markets, was considered the private property of individuals

and/or kinship groups. Forested areas and hunting grounds, uncleared land, rivers, lakes, and streams were considered a part of the commons. Given that land, in the ecological sense, is the material basis for developing the means of production, it is important to affirm that the commons was a dominant, not exclusive feature of pre-colonial African societies.

3. Indigenous African agricultural systems were agroecological in their orientation. According to Stephen R. Gliessman, agroecology can be defined as,

> A whole systems approach to food, feed, and fiber production that balances environmental soundness, social equity, and economic viability among all sectors of the public, including international and intergenerational peoples. Inherent in this definition is the idea that sustainability must be extended not only globally but indefinitely in time, and to all living organisms including humans.[67]

For thousands of years prior to the introduction of the concept of agroecology, indigenous African communities engaged in agricultural production within this context. One of the major principles was intercropping, the planting of different crops in the same field during the same season.[68] The benefits of this technique are supported by contemporary sustainable agricultural research. According to Paul Richards, they include (1) the minimization of soil erosion due to rainfall, sun and wind exposure, (2) natural management of pests and disease, (3) the maximization of available soil moisture and plant nutrients, (4) the natural suppression of weeds due to a permanent groundcover that mimics natural succession, and (5) the minimization of the risk of crop failure due to the mixing of varieties and species with different nutritional requirements, maturation rates and moisture requirements.[69]

> Traditional agricultural systems have involved a remarkable diversity of systems of cultivation. These are used with long fallow periods (periods of no cultivation) to allow the vegetation to regenerate. Cultivation has also involved ash or compost fertilization systems. A wide range of soil and water conservation systems exist; stone lines, trash lines, furrows, pitting systems, mounds with green manure worked into the soil, stone terraces, mulching, and the protection of the Acaia albida (a tree that helps to fix nitrogen into the soil).[70]

African agricultural systems recycled items such as house refuse, human and animal manure, and ash from cooking. All of the inputs used to maintain soil fertility were taken from the local area. Land left to fallow is an example of allowing lands formally cropped to recycle under natural circumstances, mimicking the nutrient recycling processes associated with natural forest succession. Indigenous African systems of production used natural energy sources and human scale technological methods, for example, hydro, solar, slopes, biomass, and animal traction. These energy systems were always localized. The Chagga of present day Kenya and Tanzania, for example, developed the Mifongo, an elaborate, efficient multi-story agroforesty system irrigated by the natural springs and falls whose source was the melting snowcaps of Mt. Kilimajoro.[71] Indigenous African farm size would be characterized as the smallholder type. On average, they are 3.6 acres.[72] In addition, pre-colonial indigenous African agricultural production systems assume that there are inherent limitations to the amount of resources that human beings can use. The belief that human communities are one of many species that are dependent upon the natural world informed this view. In conclusion, indigenous African agricultural production practices can be described, in a contemporary sense, as sustainable and organic. Historically speaking, the modernist asserts that the small, organic farm, which characterizes the peasant way, is not as productive as the modern,

industrial farm. This is why Rodney would imply that African peasant agriculture lagged behind Asian and European agriculture.[73] He further argues that the commons, absent of a strong state apparatus to direct production and technological development, contributes to the underdevelopment of African agriculture. This assumption reaffirms a core principle associated with the modernist way that centralized, knowledge production and decision-making systems are more effective then decentralized forms. The modernist approach, embodied in industrial or conventional farming is characterized by (1) larger farm size, (2) monocultures, which is the production of one specific crop over a large area, (3) off farm chemical based fertilizers, pesticides, and fungicides, (4) intense mechanization of labor and irrigation, and (5) commodity and export driven production. The belief that productivity is linked to expansion, mechanization, and centralization is questionable, however. Peter Rosset suggests that,

> The actual data shows exactly the reverse for productivity: that smaller farms produce far more per unit area than larger farms. Part of the problem lies in the confusing language used to compare the performance of different farm sizes. As long as we use crop yield as the measure of productivity, we will be giving an unfair advantage to larger farms.[74]

The metric *crop yield* measures "the production per unit area of a single crop, like metric tons of corn per hectare,"[75] hence the rationale for using monocultures in commodity driven, export oriented systems. In the short-term, they yield the most of the target crop, however, unlike polycultures, which mimic natural ecosystems, industrial monocultures create a number of problems, including insect and weed infestations, soil erosion and infertility, ground water contamination, the narrowing of a plant species' genetic pool, as well as an increased dependence on external inputs, including the mechanization of labor

and the use of chemical based nutrients to compensate for the declining productivity of the land. Smaller farms, however, are more productive in terms of total output. Rosset concludes,

> Small farmers on the other hand, especially in the Third World, are much more likely to plant crop mixtures -- intercropping -- where the empty niche space that would otherwise produce weeds instead is occupied by other crops. They also tend to combine or rotate crops and livestock, with manure serving to replenish soil fertility. Such integrated farming systems produce far more per unit area than do monocultures. Though the yield per unit area of one crop—corn, for example—may be lower on a small farm than on a large monoculture, the total output per unit area, often composed of more than a dozen crops and various animal products, can be far, far higher. Therefore, if we are to compare small and large farms we should use *total output,* rather than yield. Total output is the sum of everything a small farmer produces: various grains, fruits, vegetables, fodder, animal products, etc. While yield almost always biases the results toward larger farms, total output allows us to see the true productivity advantage of small farms.[76]

Vandana Shiva supports Rosset analysis by describing the efficiency of production argument as an illusion that hides the fact that "efficiency is produced by externalizing the ecological costs.[77] According to Shiva,

> Nature shrinks as capital grows. The growth of the market cannot solve the very crisis that it creates. Furthermore, while natural resources can be converted to cash, cash cannot be converted into nature's wealth. Market economists trying to address the ecological crisis limit themselves to the market, and look for substitutes for the commercial function of natural resources as commodities and raw material. The increase availability of financial resources cannot regenerate the life lost in nature through ecological destruction. An African peasant captured this essence: "you cannot turn a calf into a cow by plastering it with mud."[78]

Another important feature of the African peasant way is its *subsistence* orientation. Mischaracterized by Rodney as inefficient, uncreative, laborious, and often unable to produce a sizeable surplus, the subsistence mode of production emerges out of an alternative set of assumptions concerning economic development. The goal of peasant

production is to maximize security, which at times includes but is not exclusively associated with the accumulation process.[79] As Ayittey suggest, wealth is not synonymous, in a pre-colonial African context, with finance capital, for example, money; it is linked with possessions, e.g., land, livestock, and manufactured goods.[80] Peasant societies; therefore, remain highly conscious of the *ecological origins* of goods and services exchanged between individuals and communities. For this reason, a more accurate description of the exchange of goods and services in peasant societies would be ecological exchange not economic exchange.[81] Ecological exchange has a twin focus, the reproduction of the human community and the maintenance of biological diversity in the natural environment. As Toledo argues in his discussion *The Ecological Rationality of Peasant Production*,

> Variety, in geographical, ecological, biological and even genetic terms, is the main feature of peasant production, because variety itself is a risk-reduction mechanism. This *multi-use strategy*, through which peasants maintain and reproduce their productive systems, constitutes an ecologically valuable characteristic that tends to conserve natural resources by maintaining environmental and biological diversity.[82]

4. Indigenous African communities prioritized local food security as an extension of a commitment to subsistence first. This was achieved through the creation of food production systems that were bound to the *bioregion* of a given pre-colonial African state. Bioregions are geographic areas that share similar climatic conditions, plant life, animal life, and usually a common watershed. Unlike the modern state, it is within the context of bioregions that indigenous political boundaries were most often set. It is also within the bioregional context that indigenous food cultures developed. What distinguishes Mende cuisine from Wolof cuisine is the ecological and social milieu under

which the food is produced. Multiple varieties of local food crops, adapted to local conditions, were most often used to the exclusion of imported foodstuffs. The localization of food production was primary. Localization assumes that the food that a given community consumes comes directly from their bioregion. The varieties of food, for the most part, were indigenous cultivated and non-cultivated species. Species that were non-cultivated included those plants that were left to grow naturally in the surrounding forest systems. Fukiau suggests that,

> African people know more about wild, edible plants than they farm. As such, Africans themselves only know the true diet of the African. One cannot evaluate it on the basis of what one sees in the market, or in a report written by a traveler. At the age of ten, traditionally, a young muntu (person) has practical knowledge of the most edible wild plants from the forest within his regional environment.... The bush, the jungle, the forest, for any African individual, is the farm, and yet, the great majority of the crops from this naturally wild farm are not brought to market.[83]

The use of multiple varieties of cultivated and non-cultivated plants provided three important functions. The first is that it guaranteed a diet that was varied and nutritionally balanced. Second, it provided an added measure of security for farmers; cultivating many varieties of a particular species helped to ward off pests, fight against disease, and prepare for unforeseen environmental shifts such as drought. Third, it ensured the survival of the plant species through the maintenance of biodiversity, guarding against the over exploitation of a particular plant to prevent its extinction. Alongside subsistence production, trading took place within local, bioregional markets similar to the contemporary farmer's market scheme.[84] As Ayittey argues, it is a misnomer to assume that individual households, in the pre-colonial African context, provided for the material

needs of its members, without economic exchange relationships beyond the household. This was the essential purpose of local markets. The use of barter, as the primary means of ecological exchange, assured stability at the subsistence level first, before expanding to trade relationships within the bioregion. Consistent with Ayittey's findings, larger markets, beyond local markets, integrated bioregions. For instance, market centers on the Tran Saharan trade route often interconnected the Sahel region with the Sahara extending into the Mediterranean. Conversely, in contrast to Ayittey's assertion that the market was the "heart" of pre-colonial African social formations, it is more accurate to see it simply as an extension of the vibrancy and productivity of small-farm communities. This glorification of market culture occurs primarily because of the modernist path's emphasis upon the centralized, mass production and consumption of commodities while devaluing decentralized, subsistence oriented production systems that use local, natural resources in a sustainable context. Wharton suggests that there is an alternative logic associated with the *subsistence ethic*,

> The purpose of maintaining subsistence activity is to avoid becoming dependent upon purchased foodstuffs and to maintain control over their own food supply. Heavy reliance upon capital inputs and export crop production would foster precisely the sort of dependence that the maintenance of the subsistence sphere seeks to avoid.[85]

6. Pre-colonial African systems of organizing work were flexible and used the non-monetized human labor and intellectual resources of the bioregion through extended family and age set systems. Underlying these systems were ethics that prioritized the basic right and obligation to work as well as access to the basic means of production. Work is generally labor intensive and organized along gender lines. Labor exchange

occurred based upon social norms that valued reciprocity, community solidarity, and deference to the elderly. It was within the context of the extended family that labor was mobilized to meet the subsistence needs of its members. In smaller communities, kinship groups exchanged labor across bloodlines when work required more hands than were available within the extended family. Age set systems served as an additional mechanism to organize labor across bloodlines. The work most often performed by age sets would benefit the entire community, for example, the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, irrigation systems, homes for the elderly, and preparations for religious festivals. As both Rodney and Ayittey affirm, in addition to age set and kinship systems as institutions to organize labor, the guild system was a prominent feature of pre-colonial African societies. Called Jow by the Bamana for instance, the guild system organized community members into various industries: blacksmiths, farmers, midwives, potters, weavers, hunters, architects, and brasssmiths. Guild societies, in the indigenous African context, were also religious societies. Each industry was linked to a particular "honored ancestor" or "spirit force" that was responsible for passing on the manufacturing, ecological, and moral knowledge base associated with the trade in question.

Table 2.2 "Spirit Force" Associated With Trades Among Select African Ethnic Groups

ETHNIC GROUP	FARMING PROFESSION	BLACKSMITH PROFESSION
YORUBA	ORISA OKO	OGUN
BAMANA	CHIWARRA	NDOMODYRI
AKAN	ASABU AMANFI & AMANFUA	ADADE KOFI

Guilds, as Ayittey suggests, "recruited and trained apprentices, disciplined members, controlled the production of goods, set the standards of goods, and made laws against undercutting and inflating prices for its members."[86] Absent from Ayittey's and Rodney's consideration of the guild system is their significance in two areas (1) as a decentralized, cooperative form of socio-economic organization and (2) as an alternative to the notion that the creative and efficient production of goods and services is strictly dependent upon competition and the profit motive. Consistent with LVC's general outline of the peasant way, the guild system, in the pre-colonial African context, is an example of cooperative production and social ownership of the means of production. Guilds are more often than not voluntary associations. In some cases, however, they are linked to kinship groups, hence Rodney's notion of caste as a "non-antagonistic" contradiction in pre-colonial Africa. As voluntary associations in a subsistence driven society, socio-economic class distinctions, within and across industries, are minimized. In addition, their decentralized makeup mimics, in many ways, workers' councils associated with socialist economies. In addition, the motivating force behind the guild system was not simply commodity production but *human development*. The religious character of guilds committed members to a process of initiation that linked the production of goods and services to the guild member's spiritual life. Amadou Hampata Ba explains this in his discussion *The Living Tradition*,

> In the traditional African society, often-human activities had a sacred or occult character, particularly those activities that consist in acting on matter and transforming it, since everything is regarded as alive. Every artisanal function was linked with an esoteric knowledge transmitted from generation to generation and taking its origin in an initial revelation. The craftsman's work was sacred

> because it imitated the work of Maa Ngala (the creator) and supplemented its creation. The relationship of traditional man with the world was therefore a living relationship of *participation* not of *pure utilization*. It is understandable that in this all-inclusive vision of the universe the role of the profane is negligible.[87]

The Peasant Way: Conceptualizing a New Economic History.

In our previous discussion, we have attempted to demonstrate *how re-centering the land question* can give us greater insight into the social evolution of pre-colonial African agrarian societies. In doing so, it is possible for us to consider the need for new paradigms to study the historical development of socioeconomic formations. Vandana Shiva, in her text *Earth Democracy,* offers us such a paradigm. In contrast to Marx's "from primitive communalism to communism model" and Rostow's "from traditional society to the age of high, mass consumption model," Shiva suggests an ecological based paradigm that categorizes economies based upon their centeredness within what she calls the *natural economy*. For Shiva, there are four types of economies (1) the natural economy, (2) the sustenance economy, (3) the market economy, and (4) the *free* market economy.[88] The natural economy is essentially *nature reproducing itself.* It includes the earth's hydrological cycles, the earth's orbit around the sun, and the self-reproduction of plant and animal species. It is a non-monetized economy under which humans are subsumed. What is most important to consider about the natural economy is that it "is the first economy, the primary economy on which all other's rest."[89] The second type is the sustenance economy. It is an economy where "people work to directly provide the conditions necessary to maintain their lives.[90] It is what has been previously described as ecological exchange. The sustenance economy, ethically speaking, is primarily

concerned with "production in all spheres, in balance with nature and through partnerships, mutuality and reciprocity."[91] Satisfying basic needs and ensuring long-term sustainability are the organizing principles for natural resource use.[92] For Shiva, sustenance economies characterize pre-colonial, indigenous societies. They are the "two-thirds of humanity engaged in craft production, peasant agriculture, artisanal fishing, and indigenous forest economies."[93] The third economy is the market economy. It is a natural extension of the sustenance economy defined by "direct relationships and face-to-face-transactions"[94] between producers and consumers. Shiva suggests that "some are simultaneously cultural festivals and spaces for economic transaction, with real people buying and selling real things they have produced or directly need. Such markets are diverse and direct. They serve people and are shaped by people."[95] The fourth economy is the free market economy. The free market economy can be associated with the traditional liberal-capitalist model as well as state capitalist systems like China and India. Free market systems "alienate people as producers. Cultural spaces of exchange are replaced by invisible processes."[96] The genuine needs of people, spiritual, social, and material, become secondary to the accumulation process in both profit and consumer driven forms. For Shiva, "it is the disembodied, decontextualized market which destroys the environment and people's lives.[97] The movement from *living economies* to free market economies is closely linked to what has been described previously as enclosure and secularization. Both processes are intimately connected to the core of the modernist path and its propensity towards physical expansion, the centralization of production and decision-making, the simplification of human and non-human life forms and mass

consumption. For Shiva, human communities and development strategies must mimic ecological processes. In doing so, decentralized and diverse socioeconomic formations become the norm because the health of a given ecosystem is determined by the degree to which it maintains its biodiversity, i.e., multiple, diverse communities living together in a mutual, reciprocal, symbiotic context. This has profound implications for how we understand the evolution and collapse of human political and socioeconomic systems.

> Living cultures grow from the earth, emerging from particular places and spaces while simultaneously connecting all humanity in a planetary consciousness of being members of the earth family. Economies that take ecological limits into account *must necessarily localize production* to reduce wasting both natural resources and people. And only economies built on ecological foundations can become living economies that ensure sustainability and prosperity for all.[98]

Consistent with Eatwell's assertion that all political philosophies possess a set of attributes, an overt or implicit set of empirical and normative views, which are goal oriented about human nature, the process of history and the nature of socioeconomic and political arrangements,[99] we have attempted to explore the peasant way in a manner that would explicate and affirm its value as a tool to analyze the historical development of pre-colonial African agrarian societies. Specifically, we have established the importance of the ecological question to the peasant way. This was a significant step in our process. In the next chapter, we will attempt to use the peasant way, as a tool of analysis, to paint a broad picture of the historical development, social problems, and unique characteristics of AARFC and social movements.

END NOTES

CHAPTER 2

[1]Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, "Global Capitalism, the New Nadir and the Need for a Radical Black Historiography" (unpublished paper, Department of African-American Studies, University of Illinois-Urbana, Urbana, IL, March 2006), 2.

[2] G.F. Kojo Arthur, *Cloth As Metaphor: Re-reading the Adinkra Cloth Symbols of the Akan of Ghana* (Legon, Ghana: CEFIKS Inc., 2001), 181.

[3] Roger Eatwell and Anthony Wright, *Contemporary Political Ideologies* (New York: Continuum International Publishers, 1999), 14.

[4] The *Maafa* is a Swahili term that means "great disaster." It is used as an alternative to the term slavery when referring to the trans-Atlantic enslavement experience. See Marimba Ani's Let *the Circle Be Unbroken* (Red Sea Press: Trenton, 1994).

[5] Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1982), 33.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 69.

[9] Ibid., 38.

[10] Ibid.,40.

[11] Ibid., 36-37.

[12] Ibid., 39.

[13] Ibid., 42-43.

[14] Ibid., 38.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 35.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., 41.

[19] Ibid., 35.

[20] Ibid., 39.

[21] Ibid., 45.

[22] Ibid., 66.

[23] Ibid., 59.

[24] Ibid., 46.

[25] George Ayittey, *Indigenous African Institutions* (New York: Transnational Publishers, 1991), 284.

[26] Ibid., 305.

[27] Ibid., 328.

[28] Ibid., 295.

[29] Ibid., 319.

[30] Ibid., 27.

[31] Ibid., 28.

[32] Ibid., 29.

[33] Ibid., 30.

[34] The family post is most often associated with obligatory material and monetary contributions that are made by family members to a *common pot* to ensure the economic well being of the extended family in times of crisis or to support efforts to expand extended family enterprises, land holdings, educational opportunities, etc.

[35] Ayittey, Indegenous African, 2.

[36] Ibid., 283.

[37] Ibid., 320.

[38] Ibid., 313.

[39] Ibid., 328.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 324.

[43] Ibid., 339.

[44] Ibid., 329.

[45] La Via Campesina, "Position Paper: La Via Campesina Demands Genuine, Integrated Agrarian Reform," La Via Campesina: International Peasant Movement, http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=111:la-via-campesina-demands-genuine-integrated-agrarian-reform&catid=23:agrarian-reform&Itemid=36 (accessed October 10, 2010).

[46] Ayittey, Indegenous African, 329.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., 2.

[54] See Devon Pena's *Mexican Americans and the Environment: Tierra y Vida* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005), 10; *Land ethic* is a term used by anthropologists, political ecologist, environmental historians, etc. to refer to the way specific human cultures construct, institutionalize, and reproduce values associated with "soils, water, plants, and animals or collectively the land" on multiple levels, i.e., spiritual, ideational, social, political, economic, etc.

[55] Chukwunyere Kamalu, *Person, Divinity and Nature: A Modern View of the Person and Cosmos in African Thought* (London: Karnak House, 1998), 157.

[56] Kwame Agyei Akoto and Akua Nson Akoto, *The Sankofa Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Oyoko InfoCom Inc, 1999), 16-17.

[57] Kimbwadene Fu Kiau, *Self-Healing Power and Therapy: Old Teachings from Africa* (New York: Vantage Press, 1991), 111-112.

[58] Marcel Griaule and Germaine Dieterlen, *The Pale Fox* (Chino Valley: Continuum Foundation, 1986), 57.

[59] Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped,* 36.

[60] Akan culture traditionally uses day names, *kra din*. Each day is associated with an aspect of the creator. Anything female born on Yaoada/Thursday is given the name Yaa; anything male is given the name Yao. See Anthony Donkor *African Spirituality: On Becoming Ancestors* (Trenton: African World Press, 1997).

[61] Vandana Shiva, *Earth Democracy* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005), 7.

[62] G.K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1992), 95.

[63] Ayittey, Indigenous African, 285.

[64] Guerin Montilus, *Donmpim: The Spirituality of African Peoples* (Nashville: Winston-Derek Publishers, 1989), 32-33.

[65] Kamalu, 164.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Stephen R. Gleiessman "An Ecological Definition of Sustainable Agriculture" *Agro-ecology Online,* http://www.agroecology.org/Principles_Def.html (accessed October 10, 2010)

[68] Pual Richards *Indigenous Agricultural Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 63.

[69] Ibid., 1-72.

[70] Kamalu, *Person, Divinity,* 166.

[71] See Mattias Tagseth's "Local Knowledge in Water Management: The Case of the Mifongo Irrigation Systems on the Slopes of Mt. Kilimanjoro" (presentation, Tanzania National Farmer's Union Conference Contested Rights and Beliefs: Power, Dominance and Resistance in Development, Arusha, Tanzania, 2001).

[72] Oksana Nagayets, "Small Farms: Current Status and Key Trends" (presentation, International Food Policy Research Institute 20/20 Vision Initiative, Washington, D.C., June 26-29, 2005).

[73] Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped,* 40.

[74] Peter Rossett, "The Multiple Functions and Benefits of Small Farm Agriculture," Food First: Institute for Food and Development Policy, http://www.foodfirst.org/node/246 (accessed October 10, 2010).

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Shiva, *Earth Democracy*, 32.

[78] Ibid., 32-33.

[79] Miguel Altieri and Susan B. Hecht, "The Social and Cultural Dynamics of Traditional Agricultural Communities" in *Agroecology and Small Farm Development,* eds. Miguel Altieri and Susan B. Hecht (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 1990), 30.

[80] Ayittey, Indigenous African, 26.

[81] Altieri and Hecht, "Social and Cultural," 55.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Kimbwandende Kia Bunseki Fukiau, *Self-Healing Power and Therapy: Old Teachings from Africa* (New York: Vantage Press, 1991), 135.

[84] For most indigenous communities, trade in surplus agricultural products was limited to local markets expanding to environments that were often similar ecologically speaking, hence the term bioregion.

[85] Clifton R. Wharton, *Subsistence Agriculture and Economic Development* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969), 2.

[86] Ayittey, Indigenous African, 283.

[87] Amadou Hampata Ba, "The Living Tradition" in *UNESCO General History of Africa: Methodology and African Prehistory*, ed. Ki-Zerbo (Berkeley: James Currey, 1990), 180-183.

[88] Shiva, *Earth Democracy,* 14-19.

[89] Ibid., 16.

[90] Ibid., 17.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid., 18.

[93] Ibid., 17.

[94] Ibid., 18.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid., 19.

[98] Ibid., 5.

[99] Eatwell and Wright, Contemporary Political, 14.

CHAPTER 3

EXPLORING THE AFRICANA AGRARIAN TRADITION PART 2:

CONTOURS OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN AGRARIAN TRADITION (AAAT)

> The bodies and blood of countless millions of African men, women, and children were ground into these foreign geographic domains through the instrumentalities of death and birth and death again from excruciating slave labor. Thus, came into existence the *revitalized soils of the new world.*[1]
>
> The recognition of an ecological rationality of the peasant production alone challenges the central paradigm of modernization, *forcing a reevaluation* of the meaning and potentiality of peasant cultures normally considered as an archaic or traditional sector with importance.[2]

Introduction

It goes without saying that the birth and expansion of the American state and the development of AARFC are intimately linked. The literature that has emerged to account for this sociohistorical process is ideologically diverse and broad in scope. The purpose of this section is to reevaluate this history through the paradigm of the peasant way. We will attempt to paint a broad picture of AARFC and social movements in an effort to discover new contours and to ascertain what unique questions might come into view for APT in the areas of political theory and political historiography. To re-center the land question, it is useful to introduce the concept *ecological revolution.* Combining the fields of ecology, political economy, and human consciousness studies, Carolyn Merchant suggests that ecological revolutions are "processes through which different societies change their relationship to nature and that arise from tensions between

production and ecology and between production and reproduction.[3] Devon Pena clarifies this notion by suggesting that ecological revolutions "involve shifts in human consciousness, including human ideologies of nature."[4] Taking this into consideration, three important questions arise. First, how can we understand the historical development of AARFC as a product of an ecological revolution? Second, where can we locate the conflict over perceptions of land and nature, within the tradition of APT, in the African-American context? Third, how has this conflict expressed itself within African-American social movements?

On the Legacy of the Maafa

The enslavement of African people and the emergence of AARFC can be properly understood within the context of the evolution of capitalism and its associated worldview. As we discussed in chapter 1, Europe in its movement out of the feudalist period devised systems of production that both devalued and alienated the European peasantry from the land. This process was part of a larger ecological revolution taking place. Driven philosophically by a secular, improvement ethic and institutionalized through the strategy of enclosure, emerging European nation-states solidified the conception that both nature and human beings in the form of labor, were simply factors of production, i.e., inexhaustible commodities that could be borrowed, bought, and sold in an effort to maximize profits. Devon Pena suggests "colonialism and capitalism were accompanied by shifts in the modes of economic production and social and cultural reproduction. The colonial and industrial-capitalist ecological revolutions created a split between humans and nature."[4]

Africa was absorbed into this process, primarily as a source of cheap labor and raw materials. This would radically change the character of agrarian communities on the African continent. More specifically, in a revolutionary sense, it violently altered the lives of those who were enslaved to labor on the agricultural plantations of the emerging colonies in the "new world." AARFC are the offspring of those enslaved Africans in the English colonial context.

The importance of enslaved African labor to the British colonies in North America and the Caribbean is well documented. Beginning in the early 17th century and extending through the late 19th century, conservative estimates suggest that at least 2.4 million persons were shipped to the British colonies.[5] Of that 2.4 million, close to 23% reached North America. At least eight, often erroneously named, regions within Africa served as the staging points for this tragic experience: (1) the Senegambia, (2) the Winward Coast, (3) Sierra Leone, (4) the Gold Coast, (5) the Slave Coast, (6) the Bight of Biafra, (7) Angola, and (8) the eastern coast of Africa, extending from present day Mozambique to Madagascar.[6] Much of the literature suggests that due to social, climatic, and economic factors, plantation owners preferred to gain access to different African ethnic groups for their specific "native skills."[7] Pollitzer's overview is instructive,

> Thus, Wolofs and other Senegambians were favored as house servants, along with Yoruba and Dahomeans. Bamabara and Malinke from the Western bulge and Papaws and Coromantees from the Gold Coast area were sought as artisans. Senegambians, thought to have Arabic admixture were valued as blacksmiths, skilled in the working of both metal and wood. Mande people worked as rowers, transporting supplies and crops along the waterways of Carolina as they had done for ages along the rivers of Senegal and Gambia. These coastal West Africans also imported the art of net casting, which became an established tradition in the tidal shallows of the Carolina, and the women served as cooks, nurses and maids

> in the white man's home. The Bantu speaking Angolans, along with the Ibo and related people of the Calabar, were more often employed as field hands.[8]

Those skilled in agriculture were indispensable to the "economic productivity" of plantations in the American colonies. Tobacco plantations in the Chesapeake, rice, indigo, and cotton plantations in South Carolina and Georgia, and sugar plantations in Louisiana depended upon skilled African labor. This was particularly true for those areas where climatic factors prevented the introduction of a large, stable, European settler population. According to Carney, "already acclimated to the heat, humidity, and luxuriant vegetation of subtropical Carolina, blacks were better equipped than whites to face the rigors of the frontier."[9] In the process, African communities introduced crops such as peanuts, okra, watermelon, benniseed (sesame), sorghum, cowpea, and eggplant to the North American culinary experience. Michael Gomez, in his text *Exchanging Our Country Marks,* contends that,

> Rice was the staple of Mende and many others. Because women were its principal producers it follows that rice cultivation in North America was primarily the contribution of women. Weaving, especially basketmaking and the like, was largely controlled by women and survived the voyage to coastal Carolina and Georgia, where it was and continues as an art form practiced by both men and women, the knowledge of which was often transmitted from mother to daughter down through the years.[10]

The exchange, however, was not mutual. As the profitability of plantation agriculture grew in the colonies, the demand for enslaved labor expanded as well, particularly because of the reduction of indentured labor given circumstances in England. Earl Lewis contends,

> Gradually, it was becoming harder to obtain English labor in the mainland, colonies. Civil War and a great plague reduced England's population and the Great Fire of London created fresh demands for workers at home. Stiff penalties

> were imposed on sea captains who grabbed young people in England and sold them in the colonies as indentured servants. English servants already at work in the English colonies demanded shorter indentures, better working conditions, and suitable farmland when their contracts expired.[11]

The profound impact of slavery upon the agrarian sensibilities of African people was far reaching. First and foremost, it was a form of social violence aimed at disarticulating the values and behavior patterns associated with AAC. The practice known as *seasoning* was principally responsible for this. Seasoning was a coercive, socialization process that sought to force the enslaved to accept the day-to-day conditions, labor demands, and psychological and social boundaries associated with slavery. The enslaved were conveniently labeled as New Africans or Guinea Birds, Old Africans, and Creole. New Africans were "new" in the imported sense. Most often planters considered them dangerous. As recent captives, the memory of AAC was relatively close and tangible, specifically through language. Old Africans were the enslaved who were born in Africa but had spent a large part of their lives in the colonies as enslaved laborers. Most often, they were responsible for acclimating the New Africans to the realities of plantation life. Creoles were those among the enslaved who were born in the colonies. In essence, the lifeways of slavery was all they knew. Creoles, often times, were preferred as house servants. Seasoning took on many forms. Some were institutionalized processes; others underwent social practices that were a natural, unintended consequence of slavery and plantation agriculture. The emergence of the slave codes is one such example. As early as the second half of the 17th century, English colonial law changed to accommodate the role that African people would play as enslaved laborers. These laws would solidify their status as chattel. According to Kenneth Stamp "every state had a slave code. Besides

establishing the property rights of those who owned human chattels, these codes supported masters in maintaining discipline and provided safeguards for the white community against slave rebellions."[12] Slave Codes existed to regulate relationships on the plantation between master and slave. At the heart of every code was the requirement that slaves submit to their masters and respect all white men.[13] This effectively created a context through which plantation owners could usurp fully the intellectual and social choices of the enslaved. "The codes rigidly controlled the slave's movements"[14] and constant supervision was necessary on all farms and plantations. An enslaved person did not control his/her labor nor could they engage in economic transactions without the express permission of their master. African people, both enslaved and "free persons of color," were permanently alienated from the land. An enslaved person, by law, could not buy or sell property. The property rights of African-American people in the "free" Northern territories were routinely attacked to prevent the development of viable communities that had the capacity to compete economically with whites for jobs, property, and market space and to successfully mobilize to eradicate slavery in the South, given their access to material resources, information, etc. According to Oscar Reiss, "in 1713 no free black could purchase, inherit or own land, or tenements. If such property fell into a black's hands it reverted to the Crown. Without land, the freedman could not vote or hold public office."[15] In addition to restrictions on owning and controlling land, the slave codes prevented African Americans from owning weapons, gathering in large numbers, reading, testifying in a court of law against whites, drumming or making joyful demonstrations.[16] The primary goal of the slave codes was total control of both time and

space in an effort to maximize production and discourage the possibility of resistance. Coupled with the development of the slave codes was the forced disintegration of kinship groups, the social foundation of AAC and the primary basis for organizing labor and transferring indigenous social and agricultural knowledge. Families were split up and sold to different plantations. Husbands and wives were separated from their children, elders separated from grandchildren. "To be without ties of kinship was to be socially dead; an individual could exist meaningfully only as part of a network of blood relationships."[17]

Another important feature of the seasoning process was the development of specific labor regimens, the gang and task systems. The task system, most often used in Low Country Georgia and South Carolina, was the preferred system of rice planters. Under the task system, enslaved laborers were given specific jobs to perform. Once finished the enslaved had a degree of control over his/her "free time." Under the task system, the "driver's job was to inspect the work and to see that it was performed satisfactorily before the slave left the field."[18] The supposed advantage of the task system was the belief that it gave the enslaved a sense of autonomy as well as the "avoidance of watchful superintendence and incessant driving."[19] In addition, "far from promoting leisure among low-country slaves, the task system obligated them to provide most of their own subsistence during the time left after completing the task."[20] This would have profound implications for the types of resistance strategies eventually used by the African people according to Akiko Ochiai.

> While large-scale staple-production enriched lowcountry white plantation owners, their absenteeism as well as the overwhelming black demographic majority

> ensconced local customs that ultimately increased slave autonomy within slavery, paving the way for the struggle for freedom. In the face of the growing entrenchment of slavery, lowcountry slaves gained a degree of control over their time and labor. They effectively manipulated the characteristics of their local slave system: slave drivers, the task system, the slaves' economy, and the stability of their large community. Despite their slavery, these factors ultimately enabled them to acquire what has been known as quasi-autonomy. This quasi-autonomy of lowcountry slaves reached its peak in the late antebellum era, greatly influencing their worldviews, including their expectations of freedom.[21]

The gang system was the preferred method of inland plantations of both the Upper and Lower South. It was particularly popular for tobacco, sugar and cotton production. Under the task system "slave-owners organized their laborers into closely supervised gangs and administered the whip in frequent doses. They worked slaves long hours, making the workday the length of the solar day, and sometimes longer."[22] The words of George Washington, first president of the United States, are instructive. He suggested that enslaved laborers should be worked, "as much in the 24 hours as their strength without endangering the health, or constitution will allow."[23] In addition, under the gang system, plantation owners were responsible for providing the subsistence needs of "their slaves" although "slaves were required to prepare meals on their own time."[24] Choosing either the task or gang system depended on multiple factors including, but not limited to, the size of the plantation, the number of enslaved laborers, climatic factors, terrain, as well as the growing requirements of the cash crop. Chesapeake planters, for instance,

> brought knowledge of the system of mixed agriculture devised during the late colonial period as an alternative to tobacco monoculture. Mixed agriculture involved a combination of tobacco and various grains and grasses, with complementary, rather than competing, seasons of peak labor demand. To adjust the size of their work forces or to generate cash for agricultural improvements, masters sold, freed, and hired slaves.[25]

Gang labor, in particular, had a profound impact on the life chances and self-reproducing capacities of AARFC. This was particularly true for sugar plantations in Louisiana. In the words of Captain Thomas Hamilton, "the cultivation of sugar in Louisiana is carried on at an enormous expense of human life. Planters must buy to keep up their stock, and this supply principally comes from Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina."[26] In addition, the gang labor system limited the amount of time enslaved laborers could spend on personal, social, material, and psychological needs.

> The new regime left slaves little time to provide their own subsistence, sometimes restricting such activities to Sunday only. On many plantations slaves did not even enjoy all of the Sabbath, in that they had to perform essential chores such as feeding stock on the Lord's day. Most slaves were also required to police their quarters and wash their clothes on Sunday, further reducing the time available for rest and supplementary subsistence activity. The work regimen in upcountry plantations thus broke spirits as well as bodies.[27]

Most often "slave-owners developed numerous variations"[28] of the two basic systems. While immediate in some ways, gradual in others, the seasoning process sought to change the worldview of the enslaved African population in significant ways beyond labor relationships, kinship ties, and control over land. The altering of AARFC's *spiritual consciousness* was an important element as well. Although Gomez's assertion that "the vast majority of Africans continued to practice African religions"[29] and that many converted to Christianity of their own volition,[30] it is important to consider that the coercive nature of seasoning, united with the plantation system's complete control over the social and physical spaces of AARFC, laid the foundation for the replacement of the earth-based, indigenous religious traditions of AAC with the monotheistic, non-earth-based tradition of Christianity. This has important implications for our understanding of

"changing conceptions of nature" and the acceleration of an ecological revolution within AARFC. There are three precepts at the core of the Christian tradition, (1) its emphasis on a universal prophet, (2) its anthropocentric orientation, and (3) its reliance on the literate tradition. The "universal appeal" of Christianity is largely dependent upon its anthropocentrism. Unlike monotheistic religions, indigenous spiritual traditions are earth-centered. Their beliefs, cosmology, metaphors, social norms, etc., are interpreted and understood through the land base of the given ethnic group. Mayan people, for example, given their location in Southern Mexico, Guatemala and Belize, have spiritual traditions that are linked to the tropics unlike Yupik, Aleut and Inuit communities (often collectively referred to as Eskimo) of the Arctic bioregion. Although their cosmologies are expressed through the natural environments from which they emerge, they do share similar philosophical beliefs like earth as mother. Christianity on the other hand, largely devoid of references to the earth, transcends the natural world. This, coupled with its proselytizing tendencies supports the spread of the tradition across ethnicities and bioregions. When it is driven by expansionism and imperialism, it gives birth to aggressive, coercive forms of enculturation like seasoning.

Resistance to slavery by AARFC took on many forms. For John Hope Franklin, this included what historians have described as "day to day resistance," most often in the form of crimes against property:

> Slaves pulled down fences, sabotaged farm equipment, broke implements, damaged boats, vandalized wagons, ruined clothing and committed various other destructive acts. They set fires to outbuildings, barns and stables; mistreated horses, mules, cattle and other livestock. They stole with impunity: sheep hogs, cattle, poultry, money, watches, produce, liquor, tobacco, flour, cotton, indigo,

> corn, nearly anything that was not under lock and key- and they occasionally found the key.[31]

Obviously, an attack against property was a function of the alienating character of slave labor, particularly its assault on subsistence and a conception of work as a creative endeavor. Slave labor undermined the self-organizing capacity of AARFC. Both the material resources and the financial capital produced through slave labor did not benefit AARFC. The difference between the living standards of enslaved Africans and White plantation owners was dramatic and visibly unequal. Another strategy of resistance was work stoppage. This took on many forms but the end goal was usually to assert control over ones (the enslaved) body and time as well as to disrupt the economic productivity of the plantation. Franklin, for instance, contends that,

> Some blacks worked slowly, or indifferently, took unscheduled respites, performed careless or sloppy labor when planting hoeing and harvesting crops. Some chopped cotton so nonchalantly that they cut the young plants nearly into fodder, while others harvested rice or sugar with such indifference that they damaged the crop.[32]

Plantation owners dreaded resistant labor practices on the part of the enslaved. This led to a preference for the gang labor system given its heavy emphasis on supervision through the ever-present overseer. In addition, it had an adverse impact on plantation owner's perception of skilled enslaved labor and the practice of hiring slaves. Skilled African craftsmen like blacksmiths and carpenters often moved freely between plantations. This sense of quasi-autonomy was cherished and guarded jealously. During the colonial period in the Northern states, the "political ideology of the Revolution reinforced the slave's traditional pursuit of freedom".[33] The skilled African craftsperson,

given their mobility, experienced freedom differently than their field hand counterparts. In addition, they were exposed to ideas associated with the American Revolution as well as news about rebellions against slavery locally and as far away as Haiti. For Franklin, personal autonomy was a "commodity" guarded jealously by "hired slaves". He contends,

> Masters who failed to exert "prudent and proper attention" often ran into trouble with hired slaves. The hired South Carolina slave Charles, a blacksmith by trade, was proud of the fact that there was no white man around him. When his owner announced he was moving to Mississippi, Charles refused to accompany him unless the master agreed to take his wife. At different times, he shoved one white man to the ground, threatened another, and told a third that 'no white man ever had or ever would master him." When the owner's overseer attempted to whip him, he took the whip and struck him and went down.[34]

The development of what historians and sociologist have described as independent economic production was an important strategy used by enslaved AARFC as well. Independent production existed on plantations that used both gang and task systems; however, it was prominent within the task system. After a task was done, AARFC members engaged in independent economic production. On plantations where enslaved African laborers were responsible for producing their subsistence needs, a high degree of socio-economic autonomy developed. This was aided by concessions made by plantation owners in the form of land allotments and time off during the weekends in some instances. On Louisiana sugar plantations for instance, AARFC possessed extensive kitchen gardens and *Negro grounds*. Kitchen gardens provided an assortment of vegetables and livestock. From the perspective of Berlin and Morgan Negro grounds,

> were less accessible than the kitchen gardens, and slaves normally could not spend time in them during the regular workweek. Often they were located on the periphery of the plantation, beyond the land in sugar, sometimes a great distance

> from the sugar works, cane fields, and slave villages. Negro grounds were used to "cultivate cash crops, most commonly corn, although they also raised some minor crops such as pumpkins, potatoes and hay.[35]

Cash crops were bartered and sold both on and off the plantation. As stated previously, the first destination of goods produced within the independent economy was within the slave community itself. Self-provisioning was a top priority. Barter between families for food and other provisions were commonplace. Selling directly to the plantation owner was another option. Plantation owners preferred purchasing directly from their estate for "slave rations" as opposed to incurring the "fees attendant when buying through an agent" off farm.[36] According to Berlin and Morgan hunting and foraging played a central role within the independent economy as well.

> Cash could enter the internal economy from various other sources. Many sugar plantation slaves found profit in nearby swamps and streams. Hunting and fishing supplemented the pork and corn ration supplied by planters and also offered slaves an opportunity to supplement their income, since they could sell or barter some of their catch to fellow slaves, traders, or planters.[37]

The independent economy also had a presence off of the plantation. Often time, local markets close to town, ports along river systems like the Mississippi, and other plantations served as destinations for goods produced by AARFC. Oak tree moss gathered by enslaved African laborers in Louisiana was sold in open markets in St. Louis. "Within a few months the first shipment of dried moss sold in St. Louis at two cents a pound with twenty-two-slaves, two of whom were women, sending 9,750 pounds of moss in all and receiving a total of $162."[38] Trading and selling in off farm markets concerned many plantation owners for a number of reasons including giving AARFC a sense of economic freedom and autonomy, challenging the dependent character of the relationship

between master and slave as well as competing with white, yeoman farmers and other plantation owners for local food and slave provisioning markets. The Georgia code, for instance, required the enslaved to have "written permission of the master specifying the particular article to be sold."[39]

It is important to consider that much of the independent economic activity of AARFC did not take place without the consent of the planters. In some ways, it served as a strategy to prevent the enslaved from being adverse to the plantation system. Plantation owners often provided land for self-provisioning units, paid for cash crops, game, and timber collected by enslaved laborers, as well as allowed for alternative, less demanding labor regimens in between planting and harvest seasons. The logic was that "granting slaves a material stake in the plantation order was the surest way to forestall disloyalty."[40] When exchange activity did take place without the consent of plantation owners, independent economic activity of AARFC took the form of an underground economy. This was popular in regions with intricate and hidden waterways. The underground, independent economy of the enslaved often exchanged "illicit goods" with White peddlers in the mainstream underground economy. This had profound implications for AARFC's opposition to the authority of the planters according to Berlin and Morgan. They suggest that,

> Slaves found the independence that the external trade network conferred extremely useful. It allowed slaves to divest themselves of the constraints of the plantation and engage in an independent economic system they themselves controlled. Planters had influence over neither the form of the trade nor the goods being traded. Indeed often the river trade was carried on in violation of both plantation regulations and state laws.[41]

Running away from the plantation was a widespread resistance strategy as well. Escaping slave labor, searching for one's family, and avoiding the violence of the overseer were common reasons for running away. Often times, those who ran away formed resistance communities generally referred to as maroons. For Timothy Lockley distinctions should be made between runaways and maroons.

> It is important to distinguish between the vast majority of slave runaways and maroons. Although runaways formed maroon communities, many more slaves fled from bondage than ever became maroons, and the transition from runaway to maroons involved several stages. Many runaway slaves left their plantations only for short periods of time and were either caught or returned voluntarily after a few days or week. Maroons, on the other hand, had no intention of returning to slavery. They set out to form independent communities that were self-sufficient and that could exist outside of the systems of government created by Europeans in the Americas.[42]

Maroons, or outlyers in the North American context, are important to consider because they give us insight into the extent to which the culture of AARFC was informed by AAC. More specifically, to what degree did outlyer communities maintain the earth-based worldview associated with AAC? Maroonage took on two basic forms, predominantly male, semi-nomadic groups of runaways and permanent encampments that often evolved into full-fledged communities that could be described as states within a state. According to Herbert Aptheker, from 1677 to 1864, maroon communities were found in "the mountainous, forested, or swampy regions of South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama (in order of importance)."[43] One of the most common strategies of both semi-nomadic and settled maroon communities was to raid plantations to get food, provisions, weapons, new recruits, and generally disrupt the plantation system. Armed resistance was customary.

Lockley relates the story of a maroon community in Robeson County, North Carolina that was, "able to repulse an attack by fifteen militiamen, killing one without occurring losses themselves; then, "cursing and swearing and telling them to come on, they were ready for them again."[44] Cedric Robinson suggests that alliances between Native-American and African communities were an important feature of maroonage, given shared experiences with the American state and similar cultural patterns. The Yamasee Wars of 1715-16 in South Carolina, the Seminole Wars between 1817-58 in Florida, and alliances between enslaved Africans and the Natchez in 1729 in colonial Lousiana are but a few examples.[45] In some instances, large settlements were formed as in the case of the Great Dismal Swamp on the Virginia, North Carolina border. In Spanish, Florida AARFC fought and established permanent settlements that led to the formation of treaties as in the case of Fort Mose. Established in 1739 in present day St. Augustine, Florida, Fort Mose was, "the only instance in North America of the kind of free Black towns that Spanish officials in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had begun to recognize through treaty arrangements with rebellious Blacks."[46]

For the purpose of our discussion, the internal culture of maroon settlements is extremely important to consider. Most often, literature within APT highlights the militaristic character of these societies and their opposition to the American state. Equally as significant are the social formations that developed within these communities. For example, members of Dismal Swamp organized labor in groups called "the Gang." Unlike the gang labor system associated with slavery and plantation agriculture, the Gang was" to a significant degree communal rather than individualistic."[47] As late as the

1880's, the Gang as an institution existed among farming communities in the Dismal Swamp area. It was considered distinctive and "not known in other parts of North Carolina and Virginia."[48] According to Hugh Learning, similar to the *dokpwe* system of Ancient Dahomey and the *combite* of Haiti,[49]

> members received no pay from the beneficiary of their labor except that in their turn they would become beneficiaries, and food and drink were lavishly and lovingly prepared for the workers by the host family. Around the Dismal Swamp a member's call to his labor Gang for help was an absolute right with the force of law. The strength of the custom was such that objections to being called to work were rare and a member left out of a job was deeply hurt.[50]

Leaming goes on to characterize maroon economies as having a "lack of a commercial acquisitive or accumulative basis and drive."[51] Akiko Ochiai suggest that

> their (AARFC) economic goal was not primarily capital acquisition or speculative manipulation of intangible wealth but maintenance of a stable family life at a comfortable subsistence level in a community ruled by mutually understood rules, customs, and fairness.[52]

This contrasted sharply with the ideology, goals, and objectives of the plantation economy, chiefly its land tenure system. As a result, planters and maroon communities in low country South Carolina frequently clashed. For Ochai these differences must be considered.

> The difference of values between planters and maroons, arising from their hunting and landed societies, and affecting their views of wild and roaming livestock, was also felt in back country conflicts over land. Planter pioneer complaints of squatters and trespassers were bitter. To the planter, land was to be purchased, registered and kept private whether or not in use. To the maroon, land, like deer or cattle, belonged to him who used it. And unused land belonged to no one. Nor could a paper from Charleston take away the right of the user. The maroons had kitchen gardens; they were theirs until they moved on. This people had no system and no sense of private capital property akin to the European. Their system and sense of property were similar to the communal economics of the Native Americans and West African nations, and probably reinforced by both heritages.[53]

Early in its growth, AARFC created multiple strategies to challenge the conditions associated with the plantation economy and its allied social and legal institutions. Following the Civil War and Reconstruction, these strategies would alter in ways suggesting a divergence in the manner that African Americans perceived the land question hence accelerating the ecological revolution taking place within AARFC. This would have major implications for APT in the African-American context.

On the Legacy of Reconstruction

Much of the literature written about AARFC, in the areas of political history and political economy, begins by addressing the historical challenges associated with the Civil War and Reconstruction. This is particularly true of political histories like WEB Dubois's classic text *Black Reconstruction,*[54] Eric Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877*[55] and Amilcar Shabazz's *The Forty Acres Documents: What Did the United States Really Promise the People Freed From Slavery.* William Browne in his essay *Benign Public Policies, Malignant Consequences and the Demise of African-American Agricultural*[56] situates American agricultural policy and production during the period within the broader context of conflict between northern and southern economic forces seeking to reshape the development of the U.S. economy prior to the onset of the Civil War. For Browne, agricultural development and national expansion had long been topics of debate by 1862 for US policy makers and business leaders. However, rivalries between North and South had stymied both forms of development. In particular, southerners saw the upgrading in capacity of the traditional American yeoman

farmer as a threat to the existence of three interrelated phenomena: slavery, plantation control of the farm sector, and the admission of new slave states into the Union.[57] This clash laid the basis for the Civil War and the resultant course of American agricultural development and public policy. What to do with enslaved AARFC was a crucial issue. From the perspective of southern planters, slavery was ideal, given that over 50% of US export earnings came from cotton production in the southern states. On a social level, AARFC were characterized as childlike, intellectually inferior, codependent, and/or having a propensity towards violence, therefore, in need of supervision by White planters. For the northern industrialist, Gideonites, and land speculators, wage labor was more efficient then slave labor. Northern Whites who relocated to the Georgia and South Carolina Sea Islands to "help educate" AARFC "brought with them the belief in the moral as well as material superiority of free labor."[58] According to the Gideonites,

> In the case of African-American field hands in southern plantations, involvement in the market economy meant becoming wage laborers to produce commercial crops (as they had always done under slavery) and using their pay to consume northern products (as there masters had always done). Gideonite Frederick A. Eustis proclaimed, "the great civilizer here is the dime."[59]

By the winter of 1862, following the Emancipation Proclamation, the strategy of destabilizing the southern states through "freeing the slaves" provided new opportunities to pursue the goals and objectives associated with this development philosophy. Three important realities would shape these efforts. First, as always, AARFC were driven by internal sensibilities born in Africa and honed on southern plantations. This would shape AARFC perceptions of freedom and development in the post-emancipation period. Second, the ecological revolution within AARFC had advanced to a degree that a

divergence was occurring within the worldview of AARFC. Third, in the process of reconstructing the Union, the American state was in conflict over how land reform should proceed in the South.

Historically speaking, scholars have identified two basic trends within the tradition of APT. In a popular sense, they are defined as the (1) liberal tradition and the (2) autonomous[60]/nationalist tradition. Although these designations are useful for the purpose of analysis, they are in fact dynamic in their application as they are used to interpret the conditions and socio-political experiences of African Americans. African-American Agrarianism, as a stream of praxis, has been shaped by this dynamism. It finds its expression in multiple spaces under various socio-economic conditions at different stages in the development history of AARFC. For the purpose of this discussion, however, it is useful to situate the African-American Agrarian tradition within the duality described by the traditional framework. It seems that the extent to which African-American Agrarianism is informed by the liberal or autonomous tradition hinges upon the level at which a given, rural, African-American population retains pre-colonial African cultural formations within its social structure, particularly cooperative forms of socio-economic organization and common land tenure values.

The liberal tradition of African-American agrarianism has its roots within values associated with the American Agrarian tradition, more specifically, Jeffersonian Democracy.[61] Jeffersonian Democratic ideals first and foremost, assumes that a connection exist between private property and "good" citizenship. Kimberly Smith suggest that,

> Democratic agrarianism constitutes an influential body of nineteenth century thought. Its chief claim is that the small family farm is the repository of the virtues necessary for republican government. Those virtues include self-sufficiency, industriousness, humility, and respect for law and order- all of which are supposed to be encouraged by owning a farm and cultivating it through one's own labor. Agrarians typically justify private property ownership by arguing that, although God gave the land in common to all mankind, an individual's right to ownership depends on his willingness to cultivate it (that is, to engage in agricultural labor of the European pattern). They further claim that political status ought to depend on ownership of land, because the virtues produced by agricultural labor and the independence afforded by land ownership are conducive to good citizenship. "Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example."[62]

It is this orientation to African-American Agrarianism that was popularized by Booker T. Washington and his vision of AARFC development in the rural South following emancipation. This outlook was part of a broader trend by African Americans towards embracing American democratic and industrial philosophy while, at the same time, critiquing its tendency to exclude communities from its benefits based upon race. The liberal tradition of African-American Agrarianism is the most accepted form and is the primary lens through which the history and social problems of AARFC are studied. On the other hand, the autonomous/nationalist vision of African-American Agrarianism is documented to a lesser extent and has its roots in Africa and the period prior to emancipation, mostly in areas where enslaved African laborers were overwhelmingly in the majority. AARFC for instance, in St. Helena, South Carolina rejected Northern attempts to reorganize the gang system under the myth of free labor. Most often, the production of cash crops was viewed as secondary to subsistence farming. According to Ochiai this frustrated northern planters who had relocated to the South to buy up southern plantations abandoned by white southerners. She states,

> According to the northern planters, two lowcountry customs obstructed their "efficient" plantation management: allotted garden plots and the task system. The garden plots encouraged African-American field hands subsistence farming instead of cotton planting for the market. The task system favored the field hands, for they could pace their own work as they had under antebellum slavery, which was unthinkable in northern factory labor. Criticizing the system as "unbusiness like," a St. Helena plantation superintendent sickened of African Americans' work patterns: They worked when they pleased, and at what they please, and only as long as they pleased."[63]

In addition AARFC used land based upon the small farm model (10-20 acres). *Patchin,* as it is often called, was more suitable to subsistence production and was more consistent with AARFCs' perception of human and material development.

> Above all, freedpeople pursued subsistence farming because it gave them control over the destiny of their lands at the same time it guaranteed their subsistence livelihoods. To the African Americans, quality of life was measurable not in terms of savings accounts but in terms of the level of their food supply and free time.[64]

The process of land distribution took on many forms during the period. One of the more prominent examples was General Sherman's Field Order #15. On January 12, 1865, General William T. Sherman and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton met with 20 AARFC leaders in Savannah, Georgia. A Mr. Garrison Frazier, "aged sixty seven years, formally enslaved and born in Granville, NC"[65] was chosen as spokesperson for the group. During the discussion, a question was posed to the AARFC leaders "in what manner do you think you can take care of yourselves, and how can you best assist the Government in maintaining your freedom?"[66] Their response was clear and instructive,

> The way we can best take care of ourselves is to have land, and turn in and till it by our labor- that is, by the labor of the women, and children, and old men- and we can soon maintain ourselves and have something to spare; and to assist the Government the young men should enlist in the service of the Government and serve in such a manner as they may be wanted.[67]

When asked "state in what manner you would rather live, whether scattered among the whites or in colonies by yourselves?"[68] the AARFC spokesperson contended that a degree of separation was necessary. He stated "I would prefer to live by ourselves, for there is a prejudice against us in the South that will take years to get over, but I do not know that I can answer for my brethren."[69] After the discussion, Sherman issued Special Field Order #15 on January 16th. The field order set aside 7,600 sq. miles in a 30 mile wide tract of land along the coast stretching from Charleston, South Carolina to the St. John's River south of Jacksonville, Florida, including all the islands along that coastline. It also guaranteed U.S. Military protection to the freedmen and their families who received 40 acres of land plus provisions (mules, horses and foodstuffs) and protection to last until they could protect themselves.[70] On December 31, 1863, President Lincoln authorized tax commissioners to create 20 acre homesteads from the government lands to be sold the coming February to AARFC at $1.25 per acre.[71] Between 1865 and 1877, however, a coalition of White southern planters and White northern industrialist conspired to prevent the redistribution of land to AARFC using a number of methods including terrorism, voting fraud, and the Freedman's Bureau to force AARFC to settle for wage contracts with their former plantation owners in place of owning land. This process gave birth to what we know as sharecropping, i.e., feudalism in the American context. During the period of Reconstruction, four significant acts of Congress would institutionalize these objectives: (1) the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862, i.e., the Transcontinental Railroad Act, which guaranteed the expansion of U.S. economic interest westward (the lumber, railroad, and agricultural industries gained considerably from

this.); (2) the establishment of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as a federal agency in 1862 to direct the development of United States agricultural policy; (3) the Morrill Land Grant Act in 1862 that created land grant colleges dedicated to agricultural research and training, and (4) the Homestead Act in 1862, which essentially gave yeoman farmers (mostly white) access to frontier territory.[72] According to Mittal and Powell, U.S. agricultural policy essentially went the way of big business and AARFC suffered considerably.[73] Genuine land reform was perceived as a threat to private property values associated with commercial agriculture and the immediate economic interest of Northern industrialist and Southern planters. In addition, the independent African-American yeoman threatened the stability of neo-feudal labor relationships predicated on white supremacy. Following Lincoln's assassination, President Andrew Johnson sought to contain the advances made by the Radical Reconstructionist through repealing many of the land reform policies put into place under Lincoln's administration. An example of that is the experience of AARFC on Edisto Island, South Carolina. Accompanied by pardoned Confederate officers and former southern planters, General Oliver Howard, first commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau, traveled to Edisto to inform inhabitants that land redistributed under General Sherman's plan, on orders given by President Johnson, would be returned to the "original southern plantation owners so there would be no land for the freedpeople."[74]

> Trying to conciliate the freedpeople to their former masters, Howard asked them how many of them would contract with their former masters. Just a few raised their hands. Then Howard asked whether they would entrust the matter to him; all of them raised their hands. Entrusted by the whole audience, Howard suggested that they organize a committee to discuss the matter with the Freedmen's bureau agents and pardoned planters.[75]

Sharecropping emerged during this period as an alternative to independent, AARFC. The system was under girded by violence, the black codes, exploitative rental rates for tenant farmers, high prices for basic necessities (food, clothing, farm equipment, seeds, etc.), and fixed returns on commodities grown for large landowners drastically below the cost of production. In response to Johnson's policies, AARFC on St. Catherine Island resisted initial attempts by white planters to dispossess them of their land under the leadership of Tunis Campbell.[76] Federal forces defeated the attempt, forcing community members to move in mass to the mainland. It was there that they reorganized a land and farming cooperative called the Belle Ville Farmer's Association in Belle Ville, McIntosh County.[77] AARFC in Mississippi organized along similar lines. The former plantations of Jefferson Davis, defeated president of the Confederate States of America, were initially confiscated and redistributed to AARFC under the direction of Union General Ulysses Grant. Following the return of the land to the Davis family under the Johnson administration, Benjamin T. Montgomery, formally enslaved on the Davis plantation, attempted to organize a cooperatively owned farming community. A flier was circulated announcing the intentions of the cooperative,

> To the Colored People: The undersigned have secured for a term of years the Hurricane and Briarfield plantations from Joseph E. Davis, Esq. the proprietor proposes, on the first day of January 1867 to organize a community composed exclusively of colored people to occupy and cultivate such plantations and invites the cooperation of such as recommended by honesty industry, sobriety and intelligence. A tax to be assessed by the council will be collected to provide for the education of the young and the comfortable maintenance of the aged and helpless.[78]

In time, Benjamin Montgomery was able to purchase the plantations, eventually owning between five to six thousand acres.[79]

The political tradition of *Black Populism* surfaces during this period as well.[80] Organizations such as the Colored Farmer's Alliance, founded in Houston County, Texas in 1886, challenged New South agricultural policies and the racist character of southern politics.[81] According to Omar Ali, scholars often link the formation of the African-American populist tradition to the larger White, populist movement. Although both expressions sought to challenge the conditions created by U.S. agricultural policy, notably the cotton pickers strike of 1891, political expediency as opposed to genuine solidarity served as the basis for interracial coalitions between African-American and White farmers. African-American populist, unlike White populist, linked the fight against racist oppression and political disenfranchisement to the stability of southern agriculture. In sharp contrast, White planters argued "proper training and association with whites, through plantation life would prepare African Americans for life as free men."[82]

Under the leadership of Booker T. Washington, Black land grant institutions would play a critical role in the development of AARFC. African-American land grant institutions were created as a result of the Second Morrill Act of 1890. The first Morrill Act of 1862 excluded AARFC because of the racist character of the southern states. As stated previously, Washington stands firmly within the liberal stream of African-American agrarianism. For Kimberly Smith, "Washington combined the principles of democratic agrarianism with scientific agricultural reform to create a blueprint for improving the conditions of black southerners."[83] Washington sought to address the

influence of slavery upon the self-esteem, work ethic, and economic security of AARFC. For Washington, sharecropping and tenant farming had a negative impact on both the laborer and the land. "Because the man who tilled the land did not own it, his main object was to get all he could out of the property and return to it as little as possible."[84] Private land ownership and education were the solutions to the problem not to "tear down and level up in order to bring about an artificial equality."[85] As Smith argues, "Washington wanted blacks to acquire property for reasons unrelated to stewardship. Capital accumulation, he believed, was important to the development of the race, and he also endorsed the Gilded Age belief that wealth itself conferred moral benefits."[86]

Through the vehicles of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial School and the National Negro Business League, Washington would attempt to institutionalize this model of development for AARFC. This vision, however, included a political perspective that tended to exclude overt challenges against racist oppression and support for genuine land reform as possible strategies available to change the socioeconomic conditions of AARFC. In addition, it played a major role in advancing the belief that *capital exchange should play a more significant role than ecological exchange* within AARFC. This would have a profound impact on the evolution of AAPT.

Despite the problems born of the tenancy and sharecropping systems, by 1910, 45 years after the passage of the 13th amendment, AARFC owned approximately 15.6 million acres of land nationally.[87] Although the vast majority of African-American farmers were sharecroppers and tenant farmers but not landowners, the number of

African-American farm operators peaked in 1920 at approximately 926,000,[88] compared to white operated farms at close to 5.5 million.[89] Scholars attribute this increase in AARFC farmland ownership and farming activity to a number of factors, including the labor-intensive nature of agricultural production during the period; the concentration of African Americans in the rural southern region, segregation; which contributed to the formation of independent African-American communities, business districts, professionals, and educational institutions; and AARFC social movements to challenge economic oppression, political disenfranchisement and physical violence.

When discussing the historical conditions and social problems that shaped AARFC development in the post-reconstruction era, it is crucially important to consider the central role of white violence, both state sponsored and civilian based. For Herbert Shapiro, the "era comes more clearly into focus if the critical role of violence in shaping the South's post-Civil War economic development is recognized."[90] White violence provided a context for the southern planting class to exert its influence over the proposed project of radical reconstruction in an attempt to undermine its capacity to "equalize" political and economic relationships between the freedmen and women and their former slave masters. White violence would have profound consequences for AARFC. It created significant roadblocks to their genuine development in multiple areas, i.e., social, political, educational, and economic that would extend into the latter half of the 20th century. Chief among the fears of southern whites was the threat of a "negro Jubilee insurrection" coupled with a Yankee lead "general division of land among the niggers."[91] Ostensibly, whites dreaded the idea that African Americans would gain access to land

and no longer remain bound to the exigencies associated with slavery and white supremacy. Shapiro in his text *White Violence: Black Response* suggest,

> Not only were Blacks trapped in agriculture but that within the trap access to land ownership was rendered extraordinarily difficult. Whites who might sell land to blacks were threatened, as were prospective black purchasers. The threat of violence did not completely prevent land sales to blacks, but it did substantially escalate the cuss and risks faced by both the Black buyers and the White seller. These added costs and risks were so great that they virtually eliminated a market in land accessible to Blacks and priced most Blacks out of the thin market that remained.[92]

Both the act and threat of violence would take on many forms. In an effort to control the movement of African-American labor and impose the neo-feudal system of sharecropping, vagrancy laws were created. One Alabama statute allowed state authorities to inflict 39 lashes upon the backs of vagrants.[93] The phenomenon of lynching expands within this context as well. Lynching was used both as a threat to discipline those disgruntled with the existing social and labor relations, as well as to make an example of those who broke out of the confines associated with being a tenant farmer, sharecropper or farm worker, to become a land owner. On October 21, 1916, Anthony P. Crawford, a 51-year-old farmer from Abbeville, South Carolina, hauled a wagon load of cotton into town to sell at the mercantile store of W.D. Barksdale.[94] Barksdale offered Mr. Crawford 85 cents a pound for the cotton. Crawford replied that he had received a better price from another storeowner. Barksdale called Mr. Crawford a liar. Mr. Crawford responded calling Barksdale a cheat. An argument ensued and three white men with ax handles drove Mr. Crawford from the store into the street where he was arrested by the local sheriff for cursing at a white man.[95] Mr. Crawford posted bail and was later released from jail. Upon his release he was cornered, beaten and stabbed

by 50 white men. The sheriff put Mr. Crawford back in jail. At sundown, the deputy sheriff gave a white mob keys to Mr. Crawford's cell. He was kidnapped, taken to a local baseball field, and hung.[96] A local newspaper, the Abbeville Press, reported that Mr. Crawford "was getting rich, for a Negro, and he was insolent along with it."[97] Following the lynching, hundreds of African Americans fled Abbeville. Two white men were appointed executors of Mr. Crawford's estate that included 427 acres of prime cotton land. One of the executors, Ferguson, was the cousin of two of the ringleaders of the mob. The estate was liquidated. The proceeds were divided between the executors. Ferguson took more than half, approximately $5,438. The children of Mr. Crawford were given the land and $200 each. Eventually the farm was lost and sold at a tax sale to a white man for $504 although the property was assessed at $20,000. In November of 1903, in Lincoln County, Mississippi, a local 39-year-old African-American farmer named Mr. El Hilson had his house shot up by Whitecaps hours after the birth of his child. Mr. Hilson owned 72 acres. A month later, while driving his buggy to his farm, Mr. Hilson was shot in the head. Unable to continue farming and raise 11 children, Mrs. Hannah Hilson lost the farm at a tax sale for $409. S.P. Oliver, a white member of the county board of supervisors, purchased the land. In 2001, the Associated Press conducted an 18-month investigation on African-American land loss in the United States. Of the 107 cases studied, more than half (57) were linked to white violence.[98]

The Great Depression would usher in a new period of African-American agrarianism both supported and hampered by federal policies and programs.[99] Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, through the vehicles of the National Recovery

Administration, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, and the Resettlement Administration tried to revive the Southern economy through policies that sought to regulate southern industries relationship to workers, boost agricultural subsidies and redistribute land under liberal, capitalist strategies. The racist and class character of American industry undermined the best of Roosevelt's "New Deal," encouraging the largest internal migration of American citizens in the history of the United States. As an extension of the African-American populist tradition, the Share Cropper's Union (SCU), founded in Alabama in August 1931[100] and the Southern Tenant Farmer's Union (STFU), founded in Arkansas in July 1934, developed largely in response to the agricultural crisis created by the Great Depression. Despite the influence of White socialist and communist organizers within the unions, the overt presence and support of white supremacy by the White majority, routinely conflicted with the interest of African Americans who were primarily tenant farmers and sharecroppers not land owners. The STFU, however, would inform Roosevelt's Special Commission on Farm Tenancy. According to Spencer Wood, "this committee laid the groundwork for the formation of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), one of the boldest, most openly class-based and least racist programs of the New Deal.[101] STFU leadership was hopeful yet critical of the FSA given that local administration of the program remained in the hands of large, White farmers. "They feared that the elite-dominated local communities (designated to oversee and allot operating and land purchase loans) would be unfair in considering the needs of the small farmer."[102] Roosevelt's New Deal initiated one of the last federal attempts to provide land access to AARFC. Between 1930-1940, 113 rural, small farm communities were created under the New Deal Resettlement Program (NDRP). Of the 113 communities, 15 were created for African

Americans by early 1935.[103] Initially, under the auspices of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads and the Department of the Interior and later managed by the FSA, NDRP sought to "turn poverty-stricken sharecroppers and farm tenants into independent, self-supporting farmers, each on his own homestead."[104] Consistent with the concerns of SFTU and characteristic of the populist movement, NDRP suffered from major problems. Donald Holley contends that the,

> FSA dealt cautiously, even timidly, with racial problems. Farm security officials acknowledged southern attitudes and practices regarding race. Most of all, they could never challenge the tradition of segregation for fear of jeopardizing the help they could offer both groups. The New Deals model communities were all Jim Crow communities. When caught in protests between the two races, they most often yielded to the will of the white majority. Although numerically strong, tenants and share-croppers of either race formed the most vulnerable kind of political constituency. The FSA, struggling with a small budget and continuous congressional harassment, had all the troubles it could handle without getting involved in a crusade for racial justice. As a result, the black farmer never received the attention from the New Deal corresponding to his needs.[105]

Following World War I, changes in the U.S. economy, the over production of cotton, the boll weevil devastation and the intensification of southern styled apartheid, AARFC were forced to migrate out of the south in search of "better opportunity." This mass migration coupled with the industrialization and increased capitalization of the agricultural sector reshaped the nature of African American's connection to rural life and farming as an occupation. According to most estimates, between 1910 and 1940, approximately 1.75 million African Americans left the South. Manning Marable asserts that the crisis of African-American rural land ownership and the instability of AARFC can only be understood within the broader context of the failure of the first reconstruction and the resultant ideological and socio-economic constraints imposed from without to manage the African-American community as a growing, permanent underclass.[106] For Marable, "the collapse of African-American land tenure in the Blackbelt South was not a

failure of Black people but a failure of the state and private enterprise to promote equality of economic opportunity for all members of the society."[107] The Great Migration would give rise to two interrelated phenomena, the ghettoization of African Americans within urban communities and the massive loss of rural landholdings within AARFC. In effect, this advanced the ecological revolution taking place within AARFC and African-American political thought (AAPT). Some AARFC would resist the urge to migrate. According to Kay Young Day, in her study of post World War II AARFC, in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, patterns associated with the peasant way persisted throughout the expansion and development of the capitalist system, including the transformation from enslaved labor, wage-farm labor, industrialization, and the associated dependence on tourism. These patterns included communal living, subsistence agriculture, subsistence hunting and fishing, and selective participation in cash crop production to stabilize household needs only obtainable through the use of money, and, most importantly, communal ownership of land. Kay Young Day's analysis is instructive. She suggest that,

> The primary economic asset that individuals inherit from their parents is land. Although land is no longer the means of livelihood today, rights to land are an important social and economic investment in family estate. The availability of land and the aid of kin are the means of establishing a household independent of rent and indebtedness to whites and their financial institutions. Land is not a commodity that is sold, but a right that is transferred to kin as needed.[108]

For the most part, however, post-World War II African-American social movements would not follow this pattern. Gradually AAPT embraced the urban landscape as the most favorable space to achieve the good life. The fight for urban and industrial jobs replaced the struggle for land and autonomy. The Second Reconstruction, as Marable

describes it, sought to expand the ranks of the African-American industrial worker as well as protect the social and material gains of a progressively expanding "Black bourgeoisie." With few exceptions, the main goal of African-American social movement organizations between the years 1940-1970 was the defeat of racial barriers to progress, primarily within an urban context. In one sense, this can be attributed to the exponential growth of African-American urban communities. Following World War I, close to 1.5 million African Americans migrated to cities. By the time of the 1930 census, nearly 50 percent of African Americans lived in northern and western cities.[109] By 1960, 73.2% of the African-American population had become urban dwellers.[110] Predictably, progress became associated with urbanization; as a consequence, African-American communities embraced fully the urban bias and its associated political goals and mandates. It is within this context that we can understand the goals and objectives of prominent social movement organizations during the period. The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) placed a heavy emphasis upon legalism as a strategy to combat lynching and legal segregation. The formation of the Writer's League Against Lynching and the famous Brown decision that overturned the separate but equal doctrine are two prominent examples. Both the Urban League and the NAACP developed "economic advisory committees and Negro worker's councils"[111] in an effort to secure African Americans jobs as their numbers increased in northern, industrial centers. These efforts were often linked to tenuous coalitions with white labor unions. Consequently, the racist nature of urban employers and labor unions would lead to the formation of African-American unions like the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids

(BSCPM) under the leadership of A. Phillip Randolph. Although Randolph's ideological leanings could be accurately described as "slightly left" of the African-American liberal tradition, BSCPM would set the stage, in many ways, for the radical tradition of African-American industrial worker's organizations like Detroit's League of Revolutionary Black Workers and the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement. The tradition of mass protest would feature prominently in the strategies and tactics of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Project C in Birmingham, Alabama, the Freedom Rides and the desegregation of Woolworth's in Greensboro, NC are a few examples. A. Phillip Randolph's March on Washington Movement in 1941 would lead to President Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802, "banning racial discrimination in government employment, defense industries, and training programs."[112] This helped to expand the numbers and economic strength of the African-American, urban, working, and professional classes considerably. In addition, this would set a strong precedent for the successive March in 1963. Paradoxically, as the urban centers swelled in response to both movement work and access to better jobs, *African-American land loss accelerated.* The number of acres of farmland owned in full or in part by African Americans declined from 12 million to 5.5 million acres between 1950 and 1969.[113] Despite this trend, the land question did not find itself at the center of the Second Reconstruction in social or ideological terms. When the land question did emerge, it reflected more or less an "inorganic ideological struggle" or it was acknowledged unintentionally through association. For instance, during the massive

voting registration drive in Mississippi during Freedom Summer in 1964, SNCC and COFO (Council of Federated Organizations) activists depended heavily upon what Akinyele Umoja describes as "safe haven communities."

> Throughout Mississippi, movement workers knew of localities that provide them a safe haven. These haven communities-*generally contiguous black landowning communities*, in which an organized armed presence served to discourage nightriders from conducting raids proved essential for the statewide campaign. Movement workers, particularly field organizers, could enjoy a relative sense of security if they could make it to these communities before dark.[114]

Despite the obvious tactical importance of safe haven communities to the movement, as well as clear linkages between poverty and land tenure in the rural South, most often the land question did not inform the long-term goals, strategies and tactics of civil rights activist. Notable exceptions to the rule, however, did exist. Under the leadership of Fannie Lou Hammer, the Freedom Farm Corporation (FFC) emerged. Envisioned as a strategy to alleviate poverty among African Americans in Sunflower County, Mississippi, FFC developed a number of projects rooted philosophically in the cooperative model of economic development. Between 1969-71, FFC acquired 1,940 acres of land. Projects included raising vegetables for local consumption given the high rates of malnutrition among poor African Americans and white residents in Sunflower. In an attempt to raise needed capital, FFC grew cotton as a cash crop. FFC also initiated a project to supply domestic animals to local residents known as the pig bank. The pig bank would distribute pregnant female pigs to local families. Once the female pig gave birth it would be returned back to the bank. Close to 900 families benefited from the program. Beyond agricultural production, the FFC built affordable housing, roads, sewage and water systems, provided down payment assistance, dispersed educational scholarships and

grants, and developed a small business incubator program giving technical assistance and start up capital to local entrepreneurs. FFC also provided needed social services to Sunflower County residents, including medical care, childcare, clothing, transportation and employment. In addition, FFC carried out picket lines, boycotts and other social justice work.[115] Parallel to the development of FFC was the Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC). Incorporated in 1967 by 22 cooperatives and credit unions, the FSC assisted the rural poor by providing education, training, technical and financial assistance, and by promoting the cooperative production and distribution of agricultural and nonagricultural products.[116] Like the FFC, the FSC developed as an extension of the Civil Rights Movement. 80% of its core leadership emerged from organizations like the NAACP, SCLC, CORE and SNCC.[117] The FSC played a central role in mobilizing African-American communities against white supremacy in Sumter County, Alabama. A classic strategy used by white plantation owners to prevent African-American farm workers, tenant farmers, and sharecroppers from participating in movement activities was to kick them off of the land. In response, Sumter County's African-American community purchased 1,100 acres of land through the vehicle of the Panola Land Buyers Association (PLBA). The local White power structure attempted to block the purchase. Subsequently, a relationship developed between FSC and PLBA, culminating in the establishment of the FSC's Rural Training and Research Center. Through the center, the FSC provided technical assistance in agriculture, cooperative education, credit union management, housing construction, and energy management. In addition, the Rural Training and Research Center became "the focal point for community organizing".[118] It

mobilized human and material resources to help Sumter County's African American and poor residents gain access to needed social services, such as affordable housing and healthcare. The FSC also played a central role in African-American political mobilization in Sumter, leading eventually to the defeat of white minority, political rule over the county.[119]

During the same period, the land question would more explicitly inform the nationalist/autonomous tradition within AAPT. The Nation of Islam (NOI) is a good example, given the divergent ideological tendencies within. On the back of the NOI's newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks* was printed the NOI"s ten point program titled "What the Muslims Want." Point four of the program states,

> We want our people in America whose parents or grandparents are descendents from slaves to be allowed to establish a separate state or territory of their own, either on this continent or elsewhere. We believe that our former slave masters are obligated to provide such land and that the area must be fertile and minerally rich. We believe that our former slave masters are obligated to maintain and supply our needs in this separate territory for the next 20 or 25 years, until we are able to produce and supply our own needs.[120]

Two interpretations of point four would surface within the NOI. Under the influence of Elijah Muhammad, the NOI advocated a "do for self" philosophy for the African-American community. The NOI's membership was predominantly urban and largely located in northern cities. Head quartered in Chicago, its major temples were in Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and Detroit. By the 1950s, it amassed a considerable amount of wealth, and many considered it the largest African-American business organization in the country. Part of that wealth was generated from a 4500-acre farm in southwest Georgia. The farm provided produce for the NOI's internal network of

grocery stores and restaurants in addition to selling to other African-American owned food service enterprises. The NOI's economic philosophy was largely driven by the liberal agrarian tradition. It advocated the accumulation of capital and property within the existing capitalist system as an important strategy for African Americans. Malcolm X, the national spokesperson and founder of *Muhammad Speaks*, is perhaps solely responsible for reintroducing the question of genuine land reform during the Second Reconstruction. In Detroit, Michigan, in November of 1963, at the Northern Negro Grassroots Leadership Conference, Malcolm X would deliver his famous remarks on the question of "land and revolution" in a speech entitled *Message to the Grassroots*.

> I would like to make a few comments concerning the difference between the black revolution and the Negro revolution. Are they both the same? And if they're not, what is the difference? What is the difference between a black revolution and a Negro revolution? First, what is a revolution? Sometimes I'm inclined to believe that many of our people are using this word "revolution" loosely, without taking careful consideration of what this word actually means, and what its historic characteristics are. When you study the historic nature of revolutions, the motive of a revolution, the objective of a revolution, the result of a revolution, and the methods used in a revolution, you may change words. You may devise another program, you may change your goal and you may change your mind. Look at the American Revolution in 1776. That revolution was for what? For land. Why did they want land? Independence. How was it carried out? Bloodshed. Number one, it was based on land, the basis of independence. And the only way they could get it was bloodshed. The French Revolution -- what was it based on? The landless against the landlord. What was it for? Land. How did they get it? Bloodshed. Was no love lost, was no compromise, was no negotiation. I'm telling you -- you don't know what a revolution is. Because when you find out what it is, you'll get back in the alley, you'll get out of the way.[121]

Malcolm's remarks were not consistent with the organizational praxis of the NOI, specifically, its approach to "do for self" within a capitalist framework. In addition, it did not reflect the insular character of the NOI in its relationship to the broader African-

American freedom struggle during the period. Malcolm's comments, however, would have considerable influence over how AAPT would frame the land question after his assassination in 1965.

Founded in October of 1966, in Oakland, California by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) would characterize itself as an ideological child of Malcolm X. In its 10-point program, first published in 1967, it raises the land question in two instances.

> 3. We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black Community. We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment as currency that will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over twenty million black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.
>
> 10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.[122]

Although referenced in ideological terms, the praxis of the BPP did not reflect an agrarian strategy. Its stated yet contradictory intent to want land and, at the same time, be willing to "accept the payment as currency which will be distributed to our many communities,"[123] shows the advancement of the ecological revolution in AAPT, in particular its privileging financial capital accumulation over ecological exchange. The BPP, like Malcolm X, was very much influenced by anti-colonial movements in the post World War II era. In effect, the "Black nation" was viewed as a colony of sorts. Unlike

colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, South and Central America, and Asia, African-American communities lived in predominantly urban areas. These geopolitical spaces were sources of cheap, expendable labor not raw materials. In addition, African-American communities, given the disintegration of AARFC, had been fully proletarianized. The ethics, autonomy, and material conditions associated with peasant communities were absent in the urban centers where the BPP was most active, i.e., Los Angeles, Oakland, and New York. In other words, ideologically speaking, the land question was an abstraction for the communities that the BPP served; hence our conception of *inorganic ideological struggle*. Eldridge Cleaver, in his discussion *The Land Question and Black Liberation*, explores this dilemma:

> From the very beginning, Afro-America has had a land hang-up. The slaves were kidnapped on their own soil, transported thousands of miles across the ocean and set down in a strange land. They found themselves in a totally hostile situation and America became a land from which black people wanted only to flee, to escape such evil soil and those vicious creatures that had usurped it. Marcus Garvey may have solved the universal land question for black people, but he did not solve the specific question of Afro-America and its immediate relationship to the land beneath her feet. Learning from Garvey's failure, Elijah Muhammad knew that he had to deal with Afro-America's land hunger, but he also knew that it would be tactically wise for him to be a little more abstract, in order to more closely approximate the true historical relationship of Afro-Americans to the land beneath their feet. He therefore was very careful never to identify any specific geographical location when he issued his call for land for Afro-America. Black Power as a slogan does not attempt to answer the land question. It does not deny the existence of that question, but rather very frankly states that at the present moment the land question cannot be dealt with, that black people must put first things first, that there are a few things that must be done before we can deal with the land question. Like, we must first get some power so that we will then be in a position to force a settlement of the land question. After black people put themselves, through revolutionary struggle, into a position from which they are able to inflict a political consequence upon America, to hit them where it hurts, then the land question can be brought out.[124]

The Republic of New Africa (RNA), also considered an ideological child of Malcolm X, formed in March of 1968 to politicize the land question in more concrete terms. Initiated in Detroit, Michigan as an outgrowth of a Black Governmental Conference organized by the Malcolm X Society, its expressed mission was to form a national plebiscite where African Americans would choose to remain either citizens of the American state or construct an independent Black Nation in the five states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina, commonly know as *the territory*. The historical basis of the RNA's position evolved from the notion that the right of self-determination of African-American people was usurped following the Civil War with the passage of the 14th amendment in 1868. In effect, African Americans were incorporated into the American state without their expressed, collective consent. A provisional government, called the Provisional Government of New Africa (PGRNA), was established to both prepare for the plebiscite and to organize support at the grassroots level for independent statehood. Its principle architects, brothers Imari and Gaidi Obadele, argued that the Deep South has both strategic and historical importance for African Americans. He states,

> What is important is that the five states of the Deep South, with their contiguous, quarter million square miles, represent a settlement. We are saying, let us give up our claim to the Black areas of the many cities (reservations) across America -- as national territory -- and accept in return the contiguous, two-oceaned, five-stated land mass represented by Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina, through which the Black Belt runs so fertilely, and where, in Louisiana with its total population of less than four million, more than a third Black, and in Mississippi, its population under three million, a half of it Black, we could easily establish numerical preponderance with fractional Black emigration from a handful of northern cities. What we are saying, more importantly, is that our claim to this southern landmass as national territory arises from an observance of those criteria which civilized people have always held to be the test of people's

> claim to land, to national territory. These criteria say that a people may claim land as theirs if (1) they have lived on it traditionally, (2) they have worked and built upon it, and (3) they have fought to stay on it. This is the civilized rule of land possession, sanctioned by international practice, and it is quite clear that Black people in many northern cities, but especially in the Black Belt of the South, meet all these criteria.[125]

The initial strategy of the RNA envisioned mobilizing predominantly African-American counties, in western Mississippi running along the Mississippi river, to achieve political power through the electoral process. The area targeted was renamed the *Kush District* by Imari Obadele.[126] This would set the stage for a vibrant independence movement in the Black Belt South. Eventually, this strategy was abandoned and replaced by one that sought to create autonomous institutions throughout the Kush District that would serve the needs of predominantly poor, rural African-American communities through the vehicle of economic cooperatives, educational, and medical institutions. The guiding socioeconomic philosophy of development projected for the Kush District was called *New African Ujamaa,* a term borrowed from Julius Nyerere's conception of an African Centered Socialism.[127] The Kush District's population would expand due to a "reverse migration" of sorts. The *reruralization* of the Black Belt South by African Americans from northern, western, and mid-western states was a necessary precondition for political independence and genuine development. The PGRNA had its first meeting in Jackson, Mississippi on July 31, 1970. One of the major goals of the meeting was to identify land to acquire. An African-American farmer named Lofton Mason from Hinds County, Mississippi was identified. Lofton was a Freedom Democratic Party (FDP) candidate for county supervisor in 1967. Mr. Lofton agreed to sell 20 acres to the PGRNA for $20,000. The PGRNA drafted plans for a school, dining hall, community center and a

residential community. The land base was called *El Malik* in honor of Malcolm X. A Land Celebration Day was planned for late March in 1971. The celebration sought to publicly acknowledge acquisition of the land and to garner support for its future programs. Invariably the FBI, the state of Mississippi, and Hinds County officials sought to prevent the sale of the land and eventual settlement of PGRNA communities. After failed attempts to pressure Mr. Lofton not to sell, the FBI, the Mississippi state police, and Hinds County sheriffs raided the local PGRNA office. The raid did not deter PGRNA activist from continuing on with the Land Celebration plans. An alternative 20-acre site, the Mount Beulah Christian Institute, was chosen for the planned activities. Protected by PGRNA security forces, 150 people participated in the Land Celebration Day. Despite the low turnout, FBI, Mississippi state police, and Hinds County officials perceived the very presence of the PGRNA as hostile to white political power in the state. Eventually, Mr. Lofton was forced to back out of the initial land sale agreement. In doing so, PGRNA activists moved their political activities to their offices in Jackson, Mississippi.[128] Subsequently, at the behest of Mississippi state officials, forty-six FBI agents and local Jackson police raided the PGRNA's Jackson office predicated on the assumption that Joseph Steiner, a fugitive wanted for murder in Michigan, was working with the RNA. It was later revealed that an FBI informant had taken Steiner to Mississippi as an operative. In addition, Steiner had been expelled from the RNA "for lack of discipline required of their government workers."[129] It is clear that the RNA stood squarely within the rural African-American nationalist tradition, politically speaking, because of its emphasis on autonomy. Given the demographic impact of the

Great Migration and the proletarinization of AARFC, however, the cultural, institutional and social basis for a genuine agrarian social movement "from below" was not present to support the development of the Kush district. In its absence, both internal contradictions and external forces successfully undermined the capacity of the PGRNA to promote the development of "new communities" on "virgin land."[130]

The Contemporary Context

> The ability to own and transfer possession of land through private property, in turn, has invariably been predicated on other forms of economic, social and cultural power. At the same time, the development and concentration of private property rights have typically been mechanisms for entrenching and consolidating the power of some groups over others.[131]

Following the collapse of the Second Reconstruction, coupled with the mass migration of African Americans to major urban centers, AARFC social movements waned. This successfully pushed AARFC to the brink of extinction. Being a farmer and owning farmland, as a conception of the good life, became peripherialized within the context of AAPT. The infamous slogan "only six million acres" emerged to account for this development. Coined from a 1973 study prepared by the Black Economic Research Center (BERC) under the direction of Robert Browne, *Only Six Million Acres*[132] highlighted the decrease in African-American landownership from fifteen million acres to less than six million between 1912 and 1972. The multi-case study found that African-American land loss was a function of the corporatization of US agriculture, the disappearance of the small family farm as a unit of production within the American context, and the manipulation of the legal system to effectively take and prevent African Americans from obtaining farmland. According to the report the "rip off process" used

strategies including, but not limited to, (1) tax sales (2) forced sales for division (3) mortgage foreclosures, and (4) the failure of African Americans to write wills. The findings of the study would paint a clear picture of conditions that would shape AARFC from the latter quarter of the 20th century to the present. Gary Grant, founding member of the Black Farmer's and Agriculturalist Association (BFAA) and Thomas Buller, in their discussion *The Last Plantation,*[133] would corroborate BERC findings 25 years later arguing that the corporatization of American agriculture, coupled with age-old discrimination within the USDA in the subsidization of African-American farmers through agricultural loans, created neoplantations, hence African-American farmer's reference to the USDA as "America's last plantation." The USDA's posture towards African-American farmers was historic, yet its contemporary manifestation gained momentum during the Reagan Bush years when the USDA's Office of Civil Rights was dismantled in the name of budget cuts. Callendar suggest that,

> Although the civil rights movement successfully eradicated racially discriminatory laws, institutionalized racism remained and carried on the legacy of racial discrimination. In the USDA, it took the form of all-white county committees and apathetic federal offices failing to address the problem. Further, in 1983, due to Reagan Administration budget cuts, the USDA Office of Civil Rights was dismantled, and USDA stopped processing all discrimination claims until 1996. During this period the USDA Office of Civil Rights Enforcement and Adjudication (OCREA) "simply threw discrimination complaints in the trash without ever responding to or investigating them," and in some cases, "even if there was a finding of discrimination, the farmer never received any relief."[134]

The last plantation, however, would not go unchallenged. Under mounting pressure from African-American farmers during the Clinton presidency, the USDA commissioned a study that would analyze the treatment of ethnic minorities and women by the FSA. Cowan and Feder's study analyzed the years from 1990-95 and found that ethnic

minorities and women benefited less from FSA programs than white male farmers both corporate and small holder. Their findings are worth noting.

> Appeals were made by minority complainants because of the slowness of the process, the lack of confidence in the decision makers, the lack of knowledge about the rules, and the significant bureaucracy involved in the process. Other findings showed that (a) the largest USDA loans (top 1%) went to corporations (65%) and white male farmers (25%); (b) loans to black males averaged $4,000 (or 25%), less than those given to white males; and (c) 97% of disaster payments went to white farmers, while less than 1% went to black farmers.[135]

Following the study, the USDA established the Civil Rights Action Team (CRAT) in 1996. Through CRAT, the USDA acknowledged discriminatory practices against African-American farmers formally in 1997. The report, according to Grant and Buller,

> summarized the complaints of Black farmers; other farmers of color and limited resource farmers as being refused applications; being refused help in filling out applications; lengthy days in loan processing; receiving reduced loans; being unjustly denied; receiving loans well after planting season; not receiving information about special programs or not receiving debt restructuring; all of which results in foreclosure and sale of land.[136]

Following CRAT recommendations, then Secretary of Agriculture, Dan Glickman "made civil rights his top priority for the USDA."[137] In addition, Glickman called for a moratorium on farm foreclosures "pending investigation into racial discrimination in the agency's loan programs."[138] USDA reports suggest that of the 92 recommendations made by CRAT, 85 were implemented by December 1997 including, but not limited to, restaffing the civil rights arm of the USDA, implementing new, antidiscriminatory foreclosure and lending policies, increasing minority representation on Farm Service Agency state committees, increasing loans to minority and women farmers, and expanding USDA outreach services to minority farmers on multiple levels. Despite these attempts, African-American farmers continued to perceive the USDA as oppositional to

their interests and argued that CRAT recommendations were not implemented properly or in a timely fashion. This frustration led to African-American farmers filing a class action lawsuit against the USDA in October of 1998 known as Pigford v. Glickman. Timothy Pigford, a North Carolina African-American farmer, on August 28, 1997, filed a class action suit against the USDA charging that it "discriminated against African American farmers by denying or delaying applications for benefit programs and by mishandling the discrimination complaints filed with the Department."[139] Under the direction of Judge Paul Friedman, the case entered into mediation in November of 1997. In addition, a six-month stay was placed on the case. The process was contentious. Differences emerged, fairly quickly, over how to settle the lawsuit. Of particular concern was whether or not the estimated 2,000 plus African-American farmers should be covered under blanket mediation. The USDA opposed this plan and argued that claims should be resolved on a case-by-case basis. Given the history of the USDA's handling of complaints and the potential number of cases involved, counsel for the African-American farmers feared that the case would drag on for years before a settlement was finally reached under the USDA's proposed strategy. In response, they requested that the stay be lifted and a trial date set to expedite the process. A trial date was set for February 1, 1999. In addition, the court certified as a class African-American farmers who had complaints against the USDA between January 1983 and February 21, 1997.[140] Prior to the court date, however, a settlement was reached. As part of the settlement another lawsuit filed in the same year as Pigford, Brewington v. Glickman, was consolidated with the Pigford case. On April 14, 1999, the court approved a consent decree laying out the

terms of the proposed settlement. At the heart of the settlement was a strategy that separated African-American farmers into two classes, *Track A and Track B*. Under *Track A,* a farmer could receive up to $50,000 along with debt forgiveness and offsets of tax liability.[141] Those who filed under *Track A* had to prove that (1) they owned or leased and/or attempted to own or lease a farm during the period, (2) they attempted to apply for a specific credit transaction through the USDA, (3) the loan was denied, administered under restrictive conditions, awarded less than applied for, and under serviced in comparison to a "similarly situated white farmer,"[142] and (4) the process led to socioeconomic losses for the African-American farmer.[143] The USDA expected the vast majority of claims to fall under *Track A*. Those who filed under *Track B* faced a more rigorous process. They were required to prove by a preponderance of evidence damages set forth in the claims. *Track B* claimants sought a "larger, tailored payment."[144] In addition, a third party arbitrator was required to review the claim and make a "binding decision."[145] Finally, the decree required the USDA to "set up a system for notice, claims submission, consideration, and review."[146]

During the season of Pigford v. Glickman, a number of organizations emerged to help African-American farmers advocate for their interest and to monitor the adjudication processes associated with the consent decree. Notable among them was the Black Farmer's and Agriculturalist Association (BFAA) based in Tillery, North Carolina. Tillery was home to one of the original, African-American, New Deal resettlement communities. BFAA, under the leadership of Gary Grant, provided African-American farmers with institutional mechanisms to negotiate the Pigford case on multiple levels. It

is important to consider that, from the indigenous perspective, BFAA was the product of a "local movement center"[147] called the Concerned Citizens of Tillery (CCT). CCT was a comprehensive, multigenerational, community based organization that served the cultural interest of Tillery's African-American community. CCT functioned as a broad based organization under which multiple socio-political formations were subsumed. This included an elders organization called Open Minded Seniors, a youth organization called Nubian Youth, an economic development organization called the Economic Development Committee, an environmental justice organization called Halifax Environmental Loss Prevention (H.E.L.P), an adult led summer camp for Tillery youth organized by the Grown Folks Group, a community health initiative for the uninsured and underinsured called the Tillery People's Screening Clinic and a rural development initiative called the Land Loss Fund. BFAA, between the years 1997-2010, reported a membership of over 1,500 African-American farmers and 21 state chapters. BFAA played a central role in developing *parallel structures* to monitor the Pigford case to help African-American farmers fill out claims, assist in organizing and monitoring counsel activities, served as a watchdog for federal legislation and policy associated with the case, provided avenues for popular education on issues related to the case as well as the history and socioeconomic problems of African-American farmers, and engaged in organizing nonviolent, direct action activities, in Washington D.C., in an effort to force the federal government to honor the consent decree. The FSC emerged during the same period performing many of the same functions out of their Rural Training Center in Eppes, Alabama and their main office in East, Point, Georgia. To many who watched the case unfold, BFAA was often

placed in the tradition of Black Radicalism, and FSC was often placed ideologically in the tradition of Black Liberalism. This was primarily because of the presence of Dr. Ridgely Muhammad, Minister of Agriculture of the NOI, farm manager of Muhammad Farms and Vice-President of BFAA. In addition, Mr. Grant participated in social movement formations like Black Workers for Justice (BWJ) and the Black Radical Congress (BRC). BFAA also was inclined to engage in non-violent, direct action activities more frequently. A third formation to emerge was the National Black Farmer's Association (NBFA). Founded in 1995 by John Boyd, Jr., of Baskerville, Virginia, a third generation farmer,[148] NBFA's activities, like BFAA and the FSC, centered primarily around monitoring the progress of the Pigford case and advocating for the interest of African-American farmers in the media. In July 2000, NBFA established the John Boyd Agriculture and Technology Institute. The institute's mission was to meet the needs of rural communities, minority and low resource farmers through popular education strategies. The institute's programs included adult education, outreach, and agribusiness.[149] Some suggest that the emergence of NBFA was political, largely in response to the idea that BFAA and FSC represented the "national face" of African-American farmers. Boyd had a history in electoral politics in Virginia stretching as far back as the second Clinton administration. NBFA, BFAA and FSC have comprehensive websites to monitor and disseminate information, updates, and news related to the Pigford case.

During the course of the hearings, several concerns emerged for African-American farmers. First and foremost was the requirement that claimants must "name a

similarly situated White farmer who was funded at the same time the Black farmer was denied."[150] This was nearly an impossible task because USDA attorneys consistently denied access to information to counsel representing African-American farmers. This made it extremely difficult for claimants to prove their case despite the fact that the information was public record and should have been made available under the Freedom of Information Act. Callendar contends that USDA attorneys argued that they were not required to share information under the terms of the consent decree.

> USDA's practice of concealing this data left most farmers facing the task of obtaining information on similarly situated white farmers on their own. This meant tracking down a specific farmer in their county who applied for the same benefit program at the same time, with the same acreage, the same type of crop, the same credit history, and received a higher payment or better treatment than the African American farmer. This is a feat that even the most sophisticated lawyer would not be able to achieve based on public information alone. When farmers turned to USDA for information, USDA's lawyers often refused, relying on the fact that they had no obligation under the terms of the Consent Decree to release information on similarly situated white farmers to class members.[151]

Second, during the process of reviewing each case, the "adjudicator would receive challenges from the very officers and offices that had discriminated against the farmer."[152] The Department of Justice (DOJ) spent approximately $12 million disputing claims by African-American farmers by 2002. The behavior of DOJ attorneys was characterized as aggressive and "litigious in nature."[153] Given the fact that the cases were reviewed in mediation, counsel for African-American farmers did not anticipate the oppositional nature of DOJ attorneys, According to Callendar,

> They expected a streamlined mediation process, not a trial. What they got was an elaborate motions practice, USDA appeals that repeatedly interrupted the cases, numerous evidentiary objections, delay, and aggressive litigation tactics—contentious litigation at its worst. Attorneys found themselves spending hundreds

of hours processing a single African American farmer's claim.[154]

Because of these tactics, many claimants missed important deadlines, resulting in the dismissal of their claims. Approximately 100,000 African-American farmers filed claims. Nine out of ten claimants were denied entry.[155] The original estimate of 2,000 was grossly inaccurate. Included, as plaintiffs were 73,747 farmers who filed within a late claims process. Late claims were filed largely as a function of the inability of African-American farmer's counsel to provide adequate notice and to comply with deadlines set forth in the consent decree.[156] Out of 73,747 farmers who filed for entry 63,816 were denied entry into the lawsuit despite the fact that 65,947 of the late claimants filed on time based on the requirements for the extended deadline.[157] Of those allowed entry into *Class A* (22,181), 40% of the claims were denied (8,562). Of those allowed entry into *Class B* (173), only 18 farmers (10%) were successful and awarded damages.[158] Subsequently, in September of 2004, BFAA filed a second lawsuit for $20.5 billion in an attempt to challenge the results of the original Pigford case. For BFAA, the original lawsuit, beyond the obvious procedural challenges and fairness associated with processing the applications of claimants, confined the problems of African-American farmers to a narrow sociohistorical time period, 1983-1997. BFAA President Gary Grant suggests that,

> What the American public failed to realize is that the "Class" had an average age of 60. Therefore, the very people seeking justice were those who had survived Jim Crow, and many cases real plantation life, especially the deeper you went into the South. So these farmers had not only been denied access to loans and government programs, they had been denied access to education and basic rights of being able to register to vote, and then would have to have some extraordinary courage to actually go the polls and vote.[159]

BFAA's case was denied on the grounds that it "failed to show it had standing to bring the suit."[160] To date $1,006,695,028[161] has been paid on an originally estimated $2.5 billion settlement. During the 110th Congress, *the Pigford Claims Remedy Act of 2007* and the *African-American Farmer's Benefit Relief Act of 2007* "were incorporated into the 2008 farm bill providing up to $100 million for potential settlement costs."[162] On May 26, 2009, the Network of Black Farm Organizations and Advocates (NBFOA)[163] gathered in Atlanta in response to President Obama's commitment to include in his 2010 budget proposal $1.25 million dollars to settle the Pigford case. Although supportive of Obama's commitment, the NBFOA issued a statement that detailed concerns about the administration's position. Chief among those concerns was (1) NBFOA estimated that 2.5 billion dollars was needed to settle the case given the discrepancies surrounding the number of claimants allowed access to membership in the class action suit and (2) providing monetary compensation was not the "final solution." Infrastructural and ideological changes were needed within the USDA to account for and change racist, discriminatory practices.[164] In February of 2010, Attorney General Eric Holder and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced a settlement for claimants consistent with the settlement funds proposed by Obama. Senator Dan Inouye of Hawaii introduced an amendment to the *Tax Extenders Act of 2009* to include the requested funds. The Senate voted 66-34 to invoke closure on the bill, labeling the amendment as non-germane.[165] Congress closed for Easter Recess on March 31, 2010 without appropriating the funds necessary to settle the lawsuit after over a decade of litigation.

In conclusion, given the vibrant yet turbulent history associated with AARFC social movements, coupled with the continued loss of African-American farmland, what accounts for the consistent exclusion of the land question in mainstream discourse associated with AAPT? In the post-Second Reconstruction period it seems African-American communities remain predominantly urban and committed to consolidating the gains of the previous era in the forms of better jobs, affluence, increased consumption, access to local and national political office, and more significantly, escape from the memories of drudgery, psychological, social, and physical violence associated with the rural South. In effect, this supports the *silencing of the land question* and the full absorption of African-American communities into the modernist path.

Trends within the literature suggest three things. First, very little if any new work has been done in the area of African-American agrarian social movements and its impact on AAPT. Most studies in the post emancipatory period focus on the proletarinization of African-American rural communities and its associated challenges and perceived benefits. Second, very little discussion exists concerning the connection between an urban biased consciousness within African-American communities and its linkages to African-American land loss and rural underdevelopment. Third, most studies, both liberal and radical, identify the American state as a significant factor contributing to African-American land loss and rural underdevelopment while, at the same time, arguing for its active participation, under more progressive policy standards, in the retention of African-American owned land and rural community development. It is the perspective of

this author that the absence of African-American agrarian thought, within discourse associated with AAPT, coupled with the marginalization of AARFC within popular social movement organizations, suggests that there is a disdain if not a clear *anti-land ethic* within the African-American community. This is problematic for a number of reasons. Chief among them is the growth of a "global environmental consciousness in response to climate change and national environmental disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the recent Gulf oil spill, coupled with the declining social and economic stability of African-American communities. Will AAPT adjust to these conditions appropriately or will it remain culturally blind and simply follow the lead of "green ideologues," outside of African-American communities, driving local, national, and international debates on sustainable development? Langston Hughes compels us to draw on ancestral memory to find answers to these pertinent questions.

> Here on the edge of hell
> Stands Harlem—
> Remembering the old lies,
> The old kicks in the back,
> The old "Be patient"
> They told us before.
> Sure, we remember.
> Now when the man at the corner store
> Says sugar's gone up another two cents,
> And bread one,
> And there's a new tax on cigarettes—
> We remember the job we never had,
> Never could get,
> And can't have now
> Because we're colored.
> So we stand here
> On the edge of hell
> In Harlem
> And look out on the world
> And wonder

What we're gonna do
In the face of what
We remember. [166]

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 3

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CHAPTER 4

IN THE TRADITION:

EXPLORING THE POLITICAL AND DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHIES OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN AGRARIAN SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction

In previous chapters, we have attempted to outline the rational, theoretical, and historical basis for an Africana agrarian political philosophy in the context of the African-American experience. In this section, we will explore the political philosophy of select, contemporary organizations in the tradition of African-American agrarianism. Using the lens of both the peasant way and Sobhan's categories of agrarian reform, we will analyze the political and development philosophy of three social movement organizations: (1) the *Federation of Southern Cooperatives* (FSC), (2) *Neighborhood Planning Unit- T Community Food Project* (NPUTCFP), and (3) the *Southeastern African-American Farmers Organic Network* (SAAFON). In doing so, we hope to develop a sense of how the tradition of Africana agrarianism expresses itself in the contemporary period. Specific emphasis will be placed upon (1) determining the organizations approach to land reform based upon Sobhan's typology and (2) locating the political and development philosophy of the organizations in question within the two streams of AAAT: the liberal agrarian tradition and the autonomous/nationalist agrarian tradition. Three focus group interviews were conducted for the study and a series of open-ended questions in four key

areas were asked: (1) historical/cultural context, (2) localization of production, (3) land retention, reform and use, and (4) socio-political organization were used as a basis for discussion within the focus groups.

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund

Brief History

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund (FSC) was formed in Atlanta, Georgia in the spring of 1967 at the Interdenominational Theological Center. The organization consists of a federation of twenty-two cooperatives located in what is historically called the *Black Belt*. Although the FSC's primary constituency is African Americans, the organization consists of a multiracial staff, funders, and multiple alliances. The FSC has regional offices in East Point, Georgia; Albany, Georgia; Quinby, South Carolina; Jackson, Mississippi; and Tuskegee, Alabama and a comprehensive rural training center in Eppes, Alabama. The FSC's early history is wedded to the rural wing of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), particularly SNCC. The initial founders of the FSC thought that the concerns and needs of AARFC were being excluded from the mission of major organizations within the CRM. The CRM was perceived as primarily an urban phenomenon although the legacy of legal segregation, racist violence, and abject poverty is most often associated with the rural South. In 1985, the FSC merged with the Emergency Land Fund (ELF) formed in 1971 under the leadership of Robert Browne in response to the mandates of the seminal report, *Only Six Million Acres: the Decline of Black Owned Land in the Rural South*. We interviewed organizers of the FSC at their administrative office in East Point, Georgia. Organizers present were Jerry Pennick,

Land Assistance Fund Director; Heather Gray, Communications Director; and Miessha Thomas, Staff Attorney.

Conversation

Our conversation began with an account of the general history of the FSC. According to Jerry Pennick and Heather Gray, the Federation, as it is often called, started as an outgrowth of the CRM. Often times, rural activist and movement participants were sharecroppers or tenant farmers. White landowners would threaten to kick them off of the land if they participated in the movement. "The Federation was a way to provide access to land that they could control."[1] In addition, FSC activists believed that the CRM was preoccupied with defeating racial segregation in predominantly urban, African-American communities to the exclusion of economic issues associated with AARFC. According to Mr. Pennick, this problem continues today:

> Basically the economic needs of rural African-American communities are not being met. And when you hear our leadership talk…I was listening to something the other night on television, the Black caucus or Al Sharpton; he was talking about he was going to specifically make sure the needs of urban America are met, as if that is the only place that African Americans live. Our government is not meeting rural African American's needs, which I think is why organizations like the Federation were formed and why they remain. Most organizations have faded, while the Federation remains for the economic survival of an important and large segment of this society.[2]

Heather Gray believed that the FSC's position on economic issues was consistent with Dr. King's evolution towards strategies like the Poor People's Campaign and support of the Memphis sanitation worker's strike as the next stage in the CRM. It is important to consider that the stated, guiding economic philosophy of the FSC was cooperative economic development.

Initial meetings to form the FSC began in 1965-66; however, the inaugural meeting took place at the Atlanta University Center in the spring of 1967. Both farmers and craft cooperatives comprised the founding members of the FSC. This was considered significant because it was "the first time diverse economic interest in the African-American rural community, specifically interests for groups such as craft cooperatives and land owners, came together in this fashion at an HBCU."[3] The first task of the FSC was to create a rural development-training center in Sumter County, Alabama in the city of Eppes. A White ally served as a front during the purchase because White landowners historically prevented African Americans from gaining access to large tracts of land in Sumter County. The rural training center was responsible for offering popular, adult education courses in how to form cooperatives and training African-American farmers in agriculture. Approximately 1600 acres was purchased for the rural training center. The center filled a void created by the lack of attention given to African-American farmers by land grant educational institutions. Historically, 1860 land grant institutions ignored the needs of African-American farmers. Extension agents and agriculture professionals were racist and perceived AARFC as backward. 1890 Land Grant institutions (HBCUs) were severely under funded and lacked the infrastructure and political will to engage AARFC with new development strategies that were both progressive and holistic, for example, integrating social justice with rural economic development. While exploring the history of the evolution of the FSC, we attempted to trace its organizational philosophy to some previous era in African-American history. In other words, what was the historical basis of FSC's political and development philosophy? Was it a new phenomenon or did it

emerge consciously out of the history of African-American rural social movements (AARSM)? Heather Gray suggested that some of its initial supporters were White scholars such as Ray Marshall, former Secretary of Labor within Lyndon Johnson's administration. In the 1950s, Marshall did a number of studies on the role of cooperatives in the economic development of the South. Like the CRM, the FSC sought to garner the support of White activists and liberals to left leaning policy makers in the federal government. At the same time, it seems that broad support did not exist for the cooperative model within AARFC during the period that FSC was conceived. In addition, reminiscent of the history between African-American and White labor unions, White southern cooperatives were infamously racist and forbade African Americans from joining their ranks. Although "racial problems existed within White cooperatives, the Federation saw the benefits of the model itself." [4]

Four years after the development of the FSC, the ELF was established in 1972. "Its primary goal was to address issues around land retention."[5] The ELF was an outgrowth of the study *Six Million Acres*, conducted by Robert Brown, an economist at the Atlanta University based Black Economic Research Center. A million dollar gift was acquired to jump-start the ELF. The funds were used to hire one personnel, pay for administrative needs, and as capital to purchase land in southern auctions and tax sales. This was a common strategy used by ELF to save African-American farmland and to test the attitudes of White landowners and local political officials towards African Americans purchasing farmland in the Black Belt South. For approximately 15 years, the two organizations developed separately. In 1984, they merged because FSC activists believed

the goals of both organizations were the same because one wanted African-American rural, economic development and the other wanted African-American land retention. "If African Americans began to save land and the land was not put within any economic development, then you would lose the land. It would be put into jeopardy again, so both of them saw the need to merge the two."[6]

The cooperative form used by the FSC is described as *hybrid.* It is assumed that cooperatives are often cooperative in name alone; the internal politics does not reflect the one-man one vote model. In addition, Mr. Pennick suggests that cooperatives within the FSC are different from state to state because they "develop organically" out of the community because "the local needs of the community determine the nature of the cooperative."[7] The FSC is a conglomeration of state associations who are autonomous, hence the notion of a federation. The idea of local control is an important feature of the FSC's political philosophy. It is believed that this approach began at the local level within the cooperatives and then gradually extended to the administrative level to become formal policy within the FSC.

It is important to consider that the development philosophy of FSC seems to evolve and adapt to the changing conditions of AARFC. Miessha Thomas suggests that, often times, the term development is confusing. Some associate it with expanding agriculture production. Others connect it with "putting up factories and creating mini cities."[8] For Ms. Gray, this vague view of development can be traced to US public policy towards rural communities and African Americans. Forced removal of AARFC coupled with disinvestment in the rural South created a crisis in both rural and urban areas. The

livelihoods of rural communities, specifically farmers and farm workers, were compromised by an increased emphasis on large, mechanized farms and expanding industrial manufacturing in urban areas. Mr. Pennick suggest that,

> you can look at those statistics to see what was happening in the southern part of the U.S. The only place that folks could go then, if they couldn't live on their land, is to go into urban areas. You had highly skilled farmers living in housing projects. So in some ways, it has exacerbated the problems we have in urban America because we forced skilled people off the land like that. And then there were not policies placed in the urban areas either. So if there had been that early investment made in rural America, we would not have many of the conditions we are seeing today.[9]

The challenges associated with cooperative extension work, research, and education at 1890 land grants seems to be a contributing factor from the perspective of FSC organizers. The emphasis upon training students in agricultural economics and/or gaining access to government jobs to the exclusion of training students to engage directly in agricultural production seems to drive the curriculum at HBCUs. Mr. Pennick reflected upon this reality extensively suggesting that,

> not even the agricultural schools, HBCUs, are teaching their students. They are teaching their students how to go into agricultural economics and to go work for the government. They are not bringing them back to the land. They are not teaching the fundamentals of land stewardship. I guess I am looking at my generation and the generation after me in terms of sustaining land ownership; I mean we have our own HBCUs who don't even value the land. These are people, I am assuming, who are coming from the land, and they don't even see the connection in teaching the current generation on how to even work on the land. And this young woman in Mississippi, she owns some land, and she is a farmer. She is begging her peers to come on to her land to learn some skills that her professors don't teach.[10]

For Mr. Pennick, the driving force behind the shift towards industrial, agricultural research at 1890 land grants is largely a function of funding. Corporate agriculture generally supports the work of land grants. In the absence of alternative funding sources,

1890s are driven by the research agendas of their funders. This contrasts sharply with the pre-integration period according to FSC organizers. Endogenous institutions within AARFC like African-American farm clubs, extension agents, schools, and the church ensured the survival and transmission of an African-American land ethic that emphasized the importance of land stewardship, economic autonomy, and the inherent value of craft and agricultural production knowledge and skills. This was a priority at the level of the extended family and within the formation of agrarian institutions controlled by AARFC. For this reason, it is more accurate, according to Pennick, to argue that 1890s reflected underlying tendencies within the culture of AARFC. He argues that,

> they (AARFC) weren't necessarily putting pressure on them (HBCUs) because they were providing it anyway before integration because they saw the need; it was not only that the education system was segregated. In my generation, we focused on land stewardship, economic independence, ownership of the land. Land is tied to economic and political independence, how to live off of the land, agricultural skills, or other skills. I think when we integrated, all that was taken away. It really wasn't integration; I don't know what you want to call it because integration is when you accept things from both sides. We had to accept everything they had; they didn't accept anything we had, so it really wasn't integration. I don't know what you want to call it, but we lost all that. We lost all the caring from the agricultural teachers; they cared about what they were teaching. They wanted you to go back home and take over the farm or the business whether or not it was a carpenter; they also taught those kinds of skills. If you were a carpenter, you could go home and take over your father's business. It wasn't about getting a job. But that changed during integration.[11]

Ms. Thomas contends that young African Americans, attempting to return to the South, do not typically share this land ethic. Most often, land is viewed as a potential source of financial capital. In her work as a staff attorney, she grapples personally with similar views. She believes people must find ways to supplement AARFC incomes by joining forestry programs to "pay those taxes. Get extra cash to spend, put away or whatever."[12]

For this reason, the FSC development vision must talk about the question of "land stewardship" as opposed to "land retention" to guard against this tendency.[13]

The movement from a land stewardship vision to a *land as capital vision* can also be associated with the failure of the CRM generation to "lay a foundation for the present generation,"[14] according to Mr. Pennick. During the course of our discussion, this foundation was often associated with a spiritual connection to the land. In her interaction with rural African-American college students, Ms. Thomas suggested that young northern African Americans often returned to the rural homes of their fore parents with a superiority complex. This contrasted sharply with young African Americans who "had that foundation; its more like that spiritual connection as well as being raised on the farm and having all those stories."[15] This seems to be consistent with the notion that African Americans see the land as alive. Mr. Pennick corroborates Meisha's perspective:

> This is not science speaking, but I have felt just historically that African Americans have felt a kinship to the land, which has made us better stewards of the land. I think we have understood historically what land means to us as far as economic survival, you know, from being forced into slavery. Over the years, my talks with Black farmers, they have a different view of holding the land than white farmers. They don't see it as just a way to make money. They see it as a part of their life.[16]

For Heather Gray, this was not necessarily a function of race but a natural extension of the land ethic of small farmers. Most African-American farmers are small holders who don't generally use monoculture production practices. Ms. Gray's comments are worth noting:

> When you are a smaller landowner, it is more of a way to have a deeper connection to the land. They have been growing vegetables, and they are fairly diverse (production). When they grow vegetables for their family, invariably, they are not just growing for themselves. There is always this kind of sharing that

> always comes up when you are talking with farmers. In a contemporary sense, I have been just talking with farmers about marketing right now, and there is always that element that "all right, I am going to the market, but there is always an extra bushel that I need to just give to people in the community." There always is just this idea that that's fine, and you won't be charged an arm and a leg for it. I think there has always been that element of the importance of the farmer in the community providing these kinds of services. In some ways, in the Black context, the farmer has always been like the "doctor" in a way and acknowledged and appreciated for that service that the family is providing. One other thing, in connection to the land, in talking to some of the older farmers, when they talk about growing something, there is that spiritual element, that glow in the eye, to be a part of that process of growing something and not just eating it. The other thing is that a lot of the older farmers still plant based upon the phases of the moon. A lot of the Black farmers use the Almanac. The younger farmers are not as interested.[17]

The overwhelming impact of conditions created by the history of the Post-Reconstruction period and the Great Depression were suggested as another factor contributing to a unique African-American land stewardship ethic. In the absence of having access to money, AARFC learned to view the land as a life support system according to Pennick. He observed that,

> even beyond the farm itself, after talking with farmers last week and over the years, landownership is a safety net in this country. They keep saying no matter what happens, I always have the land; I can take care of myself. What they produce from the land, they can take care of their families. One man said if they put me out of my house, I can put up a tent and have me a place to live.[18]

For FSC organizers, impediments to the genuine development of AARFC remain the same, historically speaking. Because U.S. agriculture is highly subsidized and centralized, the problems of equal access to land, markets, and capital continues unabated. Racism is viewed as the main culprit although class has a significant impact because most African Americans are small farmers. USDA Farm Security Administration (FSA) officials were perceived as racist. In addition, most African-

American farmers who were considered "successful" generally operated outside the USDA financing system. Mr. Pennick's conversations with African-American farmers are instructive:

> I talked to a farmer in his eighties and a farmer in his fifties, and I heard this throughout, and I have noticed it, and they say you will never find a successful Black farmer who is being financed by the government. And they are basically right; if you can find financing in other ways or finance your own operation, your chances of being successful are much greater. Because if you are tied to the government, you are not only receiving resources but also you are giving up a lot of the management of the farm. I bet you if you were to do a study right now, 98% of successful Black farmers have no ties with the USDA.[19]

The question of heir property remains a problem as well. Conflicts within African-American families are characterized by regional differences over the meaning and value of land. As mentioned previously, northern, urban family members tend to view land as a commodity. Land speculators and opportunistic lawyers take advantage of this schism in an effort to force sale of property held in common by family groups. Partitioning and tax sales remain problems as well. Local public officials and lawyers continue to take advantage of African Americans who fail to pay taxes on their land. Meisha suggests "there are also sometimes problems with collusion of city attorneys and mayors. There are these issues, and we hear about them all of the time, like somebody paying someone's taxes to take property.[20]

Part of the work of the FSC is to address the challenges associated with heir property and back taxes before it becomes a crisis. Staff attorneys are available to counsel families seeking to maintain land holdings. In addition to land retention strategies, the Federation attempts to encourage its members to organize across industry sectors. Craft, farming, and housing cooperatives often consolidate resources to gain

access to needed capital and to form credit unions to support the stability of land holdings, build needed infrastructure, and to expand production to gain access to new markets. The FSC also functions as an interest group at the local state and national levels. It plays an important role in advocating for local banking institutions to lend to small producer cooperatives. It also advocates for progressive agricultural policy at the national level. The FSC for instance, played a central role in organizing African-American farmers around the Pigford vs. Glickman case, a landmark suit against the USDA charging discrimination against African-American farmers. It seems that the ability of the FSC to influence public policy is shaped by two factors (1) their limited power as a small, under funded advocacy group and (2) the conflicting needs and ideological tendencies within FSC member cooperatives given the level of local autonomy. This was demonstrated in the Pigford vs. Glickman case when an inordinate amount of energy was directed towards forcing the USDA to monetarily compensate African-American farmers for past discrimination as opposed to the protracted struggle to push for fundamental change in U.S. agricultural and domestic policy towards African Americans. For Ms. Thomas, this was instructive for both the reparations movement as well as other ethnic minorities burdened by similar problems emerging from their relationship to the American state. Her reflections on Pigford are worth noting:

> I think Pigford is a model that the Reparations Movement needs to look at to help them consider what they are seeking as retribution. I think it is instructive for Native-Americans and Hispanics as well. I know they have filed. I believe the Hispanic experience is on hold. A Native-American friend of mine, from the Oneida nation, conferred with me about my very limited knowledge of the Pigford case.[21]

For FSC organizers, land reform was an important question, yet the capacity to achieve such a goal was shaped and dependent on multiple factors. In the first instance, land reform should be perceived as a "process that is ongoing and builds across cultural and racial lines within this country."[22] The term itself was considered problematic, given the cultural values associated with American liberalism. For Mr. Pennick, it could only entrench the enemy if articulated in this way. Given the historic, racist character of White farming, communities, and workers, building broad based alliances across racial lines was considered extremely difficult; therefore, AARFC must develop short term strategies to keep the land that they have and to gain access to more. Both Ms. Thomas and Ms. Gray suggested that African Americans must develop a broader consciousness of the relationship between land reform and globalization as a socio-historical process. Other countries and ethnic groups are grappling with similar questions. Native American and Chicano communities, in the context of the United States, were considered important domestic examples. The question of land reform in Zimbabwe and South Africa was also significant given that U.S. and British foreign policy towards these countries seemed to be consistent with U.S domestic policy towards African-American farmers. The corporatization of agricultural production is another important problem that is intimately linked to the question of globalization. Agricultural corporations receive huge government subsidies and squeeze out small family farms. Large, industrial, capital-intensive farm productions systems are preferred. The cost of items such as equipment, seed, fertilizer, and pesticides produces cycles of debt that smallholders cannot manage.

In doing so, according to Heather Gray, local food cultures are undermined. She suggest that,

> this is one of the major problems that agribusinesses have with small farmers or family farmers because they have always wanted to control everything in agriculture from food production to packaging to whatever. They want to control it all. But the major problem that they had, I am talking about Monsanto, Cargill, Archers Daniels Midland, all these jerks, is the independent farmer. They couldn't control the independent farmer. But now with the development of genetically modified seeds, they can do it because basically, they are making all farmers, Black and White, all over the world, sharecroppers or contractors to them.[23]

Central to the question of land reform is the issue of land tenure systems. Ms. Thomas explained that experiences with Chicano farmers in Mexico showed her that competing land tenure values were at the root of the crisis. She states, "what I am concerned about is like I have a friend in New Mexico, and their land is owned communally, and I am wondering why? The Europeans' whole system obliterated how land ownership was held."[24] Ms. Gray would verify the idea of *competing worldviews* in the context of her experiences with social movements in the Philippines. "In the Philippines, the indigenous people said to me, how can you own something that was given to you by God? It's really a different concept of ownership."[25]

Mr. Pennick would assert that the racist character of the White smallholder was an impediment to any broad based land reform strategy in the United States. Similar to the populist movement of the late 19th century, the White smallholder would advocate for land distribution to the degree that it helped to consolidate his/her private holdings even at the expense of other poor communities and people of color. This would confirm the

notion that race often takes precedence over class in the American context. Mr. Pennick suggest that,

> even in today's struggle to save the family farm and to save the land across cultural and racial lines, with few exceptions concerning Caucasian organizations, the struggle, on a whole, both locally and globally, is not about real land reform but about which group of white people is going to own the land. And that's all it is about.[26]

The issue of water privatization was perceived as another illustration of the extent to which globalization and European land tenure values have negatively impacted African-American farmers and smallholders across the globe. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's construction of the Abiquiu dam in New Mexico, the Thames Water Company of London's effort to control the Ganges River in India, and Pepsi, Bechtel, and Coca Cola's attempt to expand their water rights globally were mentioned as important examples of state and corporate elites enclosing resources, historically considered a part of the commons, for the purpose of accumulating and consolidating state power, natural resources, and financial capital. For Meisha privatization is problematic. She stated,

> another thing is the question of water rights and the privatization of water. Coca Cola, Pepsi, Bectel and I am wondering who also is negotiating for purchasing water rights. Do you understand that a group of people got together and determined that water was a damn commodity? And it is not the majority of the world's population that made that decision. And you still have communities with this whole cultural connection to water. They're killing off people of color.[27]

Solutions and future challenges associated with the survival and development of AARFC were discussed at length. The growing criticism of industrial agriculture and the rise of sustainable and organic agriculture as alternative models was perceived as valuable but not without its share of problems. From the perspective of the FSC,

sustainable and organic agriculture was not "new" for AARFC. African Americans were forced to use sustainable practices early on because they did not have access to money to purchase the expensive inputs used in industrial agriculture. Modern organic agriculture was criticized for its large-scale orientation and its overexploitation of nature. Although it substitutes chemical inputs for organic inputs, it remains committed to the large farm model characterized my monocultures, strip mining of natural resources, mass production, and the exploitation of immigrant labor. Pennick suggest that,

> the same is true with whites and westerners as far as the environment is concerned. I think it's along these lines because they don't have a vested interest in the land. This is true with water resources. In California, right now where there is an explosion of organic production, they are using an important water aquifer that took millions of years to build. We see it everywhere in the world.[28]

Environmentalism was considered an important part of FSC's development philosophy; however, similar to sustainable agriculture, new definitions are required to address the needs of AARFC. Land stewardship or environmental justice were considered more appropriate terms given the tendency of the White led conservation movement to exclude poor people and people of color from strategies aimed at conserving natural resources. According to Meisha land stewardship assumes that people belonged to the natural landscape and were not instinctively intruders or exploiters. "I'd rather use the term land stewardship; I really would. Because the white conservation organizations would rather save Bambi and to hell with the poor person who may be living on this land for X number of years, and that is all they have; to hell with them, we have to save the deer running on the property."[29]

The sustainable agricultural call for the construction of local food production and distributions systems is redefined within the context of the FSC. Typically, organic products are marketed to high end, middle-class White consumers. Given that the FSC seeks to improve the conditions of low income AARFC, this model was not feasible or philosophically consistent. FSC advocates for *food sovereignty* for low-income African-American communities. In addition, marketing strategies used for the White organic consumer market such as Community Supported Agricultural (CSA), were not practical for African-American communities because they required a large prepayment prior to receiving food. Consumers on a fixed income cannot afford the prepayment, therefore, not inclined to participate in such a system. According to Mr. Pennick,

> we are direct marketing and selling to local people, community markets, and WIC markets, and we are also developing a regional marketing system where we pull resources together to market across state lines. We haven't had success with CSAs as it is defined in regard to prepurchasing. Our community-supported agriculture is marketing directly to the community. It takes a lot of education, and for some reason, African Americans are not going to put money up front. It is just one model. If you had a farm, maybe five ten miles outside of Atlanta and you dealt with professionals at the Atlanta University Center, they may be willing to do that. [30]

FSC's concept of sustainable agricultural links environmentally sound production practices with socially just and equitable food distribution systems.

Analysis

> Each agrarian reform had its unique characteristics, depending on the historical development of the country and the level of organization among the rural population.[31]

> Each of these different organizational structures demands particular skills, experience, and knowledge in negotiating among its defined membership. *Consequently each of them had its own unique organizational culture, which*

assisted or hindered its ability to function well in a multicultural and diverse international movement.[32]

A key assumption of the peasant way, as articulated by La Via Campesina, is the idea of unity in diversity. In other words, the concrete application of fundamental principles held by agrarian social movement organizations can express itself differently based upon the historical and socio-economic conditions in which the organizations find themselves, without sacrificing core development goals and objectives. The notion of *endogenous development* echoes this approach and in many ways, represents an important component of FSC's development philosophy. Endogenous development can be understood as,

1. Local control over the development process and retention of the benefits in the local area.
2. Taking cultural values seriously and appreciating worldviews.
3. Balance between local and external resources, i.e., labor, ecological, and knowledge.[33]

This is also consistent with the peasant way's emphasis upon the local autonomy of agrarian communities. Autonomy should not be confused with isolation. Autonomy assumes a balance between the internal and external on at least two levels: (1) resource use and (2) decision-making. Both ensure that the benefits of development are mutual and localized. For this reason, it is appropriate to conceive of autonomy as synonymous with endogenous development. Examples of autonomy and endogenous development express itself on multiple levels within FSC's political and development philosophy. For example, the concept of a federation assumes the coalescing of local, autonomous

communities, in this case, cooperatives for mutual benefit. FSC's philosophy of developing administrative policy supports a bottom up approach driven by the cultural, economic, and social needs of its member cooperatives. This requires FSC organizers to adapt administrative strategies to the possibility that hybrid forms of the cooperative model will emerge within the various state associations. This seems to be viewed as a source of strength. The principle of unity in diversity also expresses itself in the various economic strategies used by the FSC. This is particularly true for its position on the development of local food systems. The emphasis on direct marketing, both local and regional, through southern-based state associations, is one example. This allows for member cooperatives to maintain a level of flexibility in their production and distribution practices in order to take advantage of niche and conventional markets. Unlike farmer's markets, conventional markets (e.g. grocery store chains) have centralized buying schemes that require farmers to produce on a large scale and to standardize what is produced to remain profitable. This is problematic for small farms that lack the land and capital to engage successfully in mass production. In contrast, farmer's markets and direct marketing to consumers allows for diversity in production and distribution schemes.

The initial founding of the FSC to address the socio-economic needs of AARFC in response to the narrow, urban-based vision of the CRM is important to highlight. This is significant because it demonstrates a commitment to rural communities against the backdrop of "the history of exploitation to which rural, peripheral economies are submitted, the worsening of social inequality caused by the capitalist model and the

increased exploitation of the small farmer."[34] Disinvestment in rural communities tends to be the rule not the exception. In harmony with the peasant way, FSC seeks to reverse this trend through its commitment to AARFC.

Consistent with most organized attempts to resolve the problems of AARFC, the FSC seems to embrace a single axis approach, the economic sphere. As Peter Rosset argues, although economics is important, if scale of production, environmental and technological issues are not addressed concurrently, it will not permit AARFC to escape from the crisis. FSC's most significant contribution exists in the area of cooperative training and marketing. Because of FSC's emphasis on economic development, very little attention has been given to other areas. For example,

1. Although the rural training center sits on 1600 acres, it is not self-supporting and does not engage directly in agricultural or craft production. The staff is primarily composed of administration, researchers, and program coordinators (forestry, cooperatives and community organizing).
2. Specific programs to explore and offer alternatives to the industrial agricultural model are lacking. No significant programs in the areas of organic and sustainable agricultural production exist.
3. Although considered important, philosophically, no specific programs or departments exist to address issues associated with environmental quality within AARFC. Although FCS staff expressed concern over models of development in their emphasis on the difference between land retention and land stewardship, this didn't seem to directly inform FSC programs and policy.

4. The rural training center no longer encourages the development of projects that emphasize subsistence activities within AARFC.

Although a general awareness of the contradictions associated with private property regimes exists among the FSC organizers that were interviewed, beyond the commitment to a cooperative economic vision, the FSC does not overtly support the peasant way's notion of the commons. By default, its praxis can be categorized, according to Sobahn's typology, as non-*egalitarian agrarian reform*, specifically the market led variety. This characterizes most strategies used by the Land Assistance Fund arm of the FSC, particularly its popular education programs on heir property, tax sales, government subsidy programs as well as its work in the Pigford vs. Glickman case. It is our contention that the FSC pragmatically vacillates between the liberal and nationalist traditions of AAT. This is probably in response to the strength of forces external to AARFC that oppose genuine and integrated land reform as well as the entrenchment of the liberal agrarian tradition within the state associations and member cooperatives.

Neighborhood Planning Unit- T Community Food Project

Brief History

The Neighborhood Planning Unit-T Community Food Project (NPUTCFP) was established in 2005 under the leadership of Mr. Kwabena Nkromo. The NPUTCFP was an outgrowth of a partnership between Neighborhood Planning Unit-T (NPUT), the City of Atlanta and Creating Vibrant Communities Inc. (CVC). In 1974, during the administration of Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson, the NPU system was established to provide "an opportunity for citizens to participate actively in the Comprehensive

Development Plan (CDP), now called the Atlanta Strategic Action Plan."[35] The CDP charts the city of Atlanta's projected development goals for three consecutive 5-year periods (5 years, 10 years, 15 years). This includes delineating a set of community objectives that will "improve the quality of life" for Atlanta's citizens in areas such as land use, transportation, housing, conservation of natural and cultural resources, economic development, community facilities and services, intergovernmental coordination, and urban design.[36] Zoning laws and land use patterns are central aspects of the CDP. The NPU's role is to provide grassroots, civic input into the planning decisions of Atlanta city government. The NPU system divides the city of Atlanta into twenty-five zones. Each zone is comprised of a collection of neighborhoods and is represented by a letter of the alphabet. NPU-T is located in Southwest Atlanta and represents seven Atlanta neighborhoods: Atlanta University Center, Ashview Heights, Harris Chiles, Just Us Neighbors, The Villages at Castleberry Hill, West End, and Westview.[37] Kwabena Nkromo was elected NPU-T chair in 2008. The Community Food Project (CFP), the brainchild of Mr. Nkromo, was conceived of as a strategy to improve the quality of life of Southwest Atlanta citizens, given the historic socio-economic challenges associated with urban, African-American communities. As NPU-T chair, Nkromo partnered with the CVC to increase the capacity of the NPU-T to develop and expand the Community Food Project. The CVC is a community development corporation founded in 2005 by Michael Mumper to serve the needs of the historic West End neighborhood. Under the auspices of the CVC, the Community Food Project received its initial funding to establish an urban garden project on a space owned by the

Shrine of the Black Madonna (SBM), also known as the Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church. It is from this space that the NPUTCFP launched its efforts to start an urban agricultural movement among African-American residents in Atlanta. We interviewed Mr. Nkromo at his home in Southwest Atlanta.

Conversation

We began our discussion with an analysis of the historical formation and structure of the NPU system, given its central role in the CFP. Nkromo places the potential use of the NPU within the framework of what Aldon Morris has described as *indigenous institutions*.[38] NPU-T leadership is organized within an executive council comprised of a chair, vice chair, secretary, recording secretary, treasurer, parliamentarian, sergeant at arms, community planner, community ambassador, and chaplain. Elections occur in the fall of each year. NPU leadership, in effect, serves as the "first tier of elected city officials."[39] Although they are volunteers, NPU officials are held to the ethics code of the City of Atlanta. In addition, the chair and vice chair must submit financial disclosure forms to city government. Typically 80-100 persons, including the executive council, meet monthly in response to an agenda submitted by the planning unit of Atlanta city government. For instance, during the annual Malcolm X festival held in May, the NPU-T votes on its support for a permit for the festival. NPU decisions are "advisory not binding." Most often, however, city government goes with the recommendations of the NPU body. Nkromo perceives the NPU as somewhere in between city council and neighborhood associations. NPU chairs, in terms of civic space, are considered "pretty powerful." Typically, NPUs "react" by responding to agendas set by city government.

Under Nkromo's leadership, in 2008, an attempt was made to move the NPU system beyond this reactionary posture. In Nkromo's words,

> beyond receiving the agenda of the city, what else can be done? We basically said what else can people do when people come together once a month in an organized fashion. We live in the Southwest area of the city, which has been traditionally underdeveloped and marginalized in terms of city services. And we also deal with populations that have some real problems around entrenched socio-economic issues. We feel like we didn't have the luxury to casually meet once a month and pass on recommendations to the city. We tried to co-op that civic space for purposes basically of community building.[40]

During Nkromo's administration, a retreat was organized to create a policy agenda for the NPU-T community. Attending the retreat were representatives from the various neighborhood associations within the geographical boundaries of NPU-T, as well as the NPU-T executive leadership council. For Nkromo, typically, neighborhood associations, including churches and community development corporations, serve as the most popular form of representation at the grassroots level. However, most are not healthy in the democratic sense.[41] From this perspective, the neighborhood associations were encouraged to engage and evaluate NPU-T policy in the same way that NPU-T engages and evaluates Atlanta city government's public policy goals and objectives. Nkromo considers this a strategy that has the potential to both expand and push a genuine, grassroots political culture deeper into the fabric of Southwest Atlanta's African American community. Out of the retreat, a six point, proactive policy plan was developed. The plan was taken to each neighborhood association to vote on in an effort to gain broad based, popular support and legitimacy for its goals and objectives. It is clear that although much of the agenda was created by the NPU-T executive body, the actual six point plan was "vetted in public space"[42] to get crucial feedback and to

encourage more grassroots involvement in the NPU system. It is in this context that the CFP emerges as a policy goal of NPU-T.

Nkromo's background as a student and community organizer in the nationalist/autonomous tradition of APT is important to consider. A native of Boston, Massachusetts and a resident of the legendary Roxbury district, Nkromo came of age and matured politically during the peak of African-American grassroots politics in the late 1980s. He was a participant in the struggle of African American and Latino communities to break away from the city of Boston to create their own municipality called Mandela. While in Boston, Nkromo was a member of the African Book Club, a nationalist study group under the leadership of a Dr. Mutavana, former Bay Area activist and Panther. Dr. Mutavana was also heavily involved in establishing an African-American expatriate community in Ghana, West Africa. According Nkromo, based on his cumulative experience as a an avowed Pan-Africanist and community organizer, Dr. Mutavana encouraged the members to engage in study and work in three specific areas (1) food production, (2) education, and (3) health.[43] Of the three, Dr. Mutavana believed that food production was the most critical. For this reason, Nkromo moved south to attend Tuskegee University to study agriculture. After spending a year at Tuskegee, Nkromo left largely in response to his dissatisfaction with the school's emphasis on training students to become researchers for large, industrial agricultural corporations. Very little if any emphasis was placed upon addressing the food production needs of developing states and communities in the African world. After leaving Tuskegee, Nkromo moved to Atlanta, Georgia for two reasons. First, three of his siblings were residents and served as

a source of support. Second, Nkromo was drawn to the SBM, also known as the Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church, after reading Albert Cleage's *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church.* Given Nkromo's identification with the nationalist/autonomous tradition, the ideology of the SBM appealed to his sensibilities. In addition, the SBM was involved in raising funds for a land-based project called Beulah Land. The project sought to acquire 5,000 acres of land to establish a community and agricultural enterprises to support the work of the SBM. For Nkromo, this was a dream come true. Without leaving the United States, it was possible for him to engage in the work suggested by Dr. Mutavana. Subsequently, Nkromo joined the SBM and was sent to Clemson University to major in agribusiness in preparation for the purchase of Beulah Land. Parallel to his participation in the Beulah Land project, Nkromo traveled to the SBM's location in Houston, Texas in the summer of 1996. During this time, he attended the Southwest Texas Urban Agricultural Conference. A local non-profit called Urban Harvest under the leadership of Bob Randall organized the conference. Randall, an ecological anthropologist, founded the organization in 1994 to "improve the quality of life of communities in the greater Houston area through the creation of urban gardens."[44] In the words of Nkromo, the conference was,

> a road to Damascus type experience or a Pauline awakening to what was the real gospel of food production. Going into the 21st century, industrial scale agriculture was outdated given its economic, social, and environmental contradictions. The idea that you could close the gap between where people live and where food is grown has serious implications.[45]

Given Nkromo's "conversion" coupled with his dissatisfaction with the agribusiness model that characterized the SBM's Beulah Land project, he abandoned his studies at

Clemson and invested in "the non-formal, layman's network" of small-scale agricultural education, for example, nonprofits, 4-H clubs, cooperative extension services, and neighbors.[46] His experiences in Houston taught him that small, human scale, urban agriculture is key, given the massive rural to urban migration. For Nkromo, urban agriculture has a way of meeting the needs of traditionally marginalized communities in light of the fact that the sustainable development and alternative agriculture movement have often been associated with "communities of privilege," such as the White middle class. During the transformation, Nkromo gained practical, urban agricultural skills but primarily became an ideological proponent of the urban agricultural movement. This allowed him to marry his previous activist work with his passion for land issues. His association with NPU-T represented a "transformation from activist to public official." [47] For Nkromo, this enabled him to carry the best practices associated with grassroots, community development to the table when talking about sustainable development in a mainstream, political context.

The historic relationship between the SBM and the NPU-T is important to reflect on as well. The NPU system was established in 1974. This was close to the same time that the SBM expanded to Atlanta. The SBM, originally founded in Detroit, Michigan, followed the missionary traditions of the Christian Church. In other words, its physical expansion and its view of *liberation work*, in the context of African-American communities, were synonymous with the notion of missionary work. The rise of African-American elected officials in the early 70s attracted the SBM to Atlanta. Maynard Jackson played an important role in the SBM relocating to the West End neighborhood.

Historically, the SBM has been active in grassroots politics. Albert Cleage played a crucial role in Coleman Young's election as Detroit's first African-American mayor. According to Nkromo, the SBM brought this tradition with them to Atlanta. Given that electoral politics is central to the NPU system, the SBM dominated NPU-T from its inception. Because the SBM organized and lived within communal structures, it formed a dense, culturally homogenous population in the West End. This allowed them to form a large, unified voting block within NPU-T. As an interest group, SBM behaved similarly to a neighborhood association. At the same time, it differed because it functioned as a faith community through a unified worldview with specific ideological goals and objectives. Most neighborhood associations tended to be heterogeneous in terms of their ideological beliefs. For Nkromo, in some sense, this was problematic. The missionary focus of the SBM tended to alienate it from the broader African-American community. Members of the SBM were primarily transplants from other parts of the country. They were not indigenous to Atlanta's African-American community. Even as it absorbed indigenous Atlantans into its fold, those who resided in the communal properties of the SBM were not indigenous to NPU-T neighborhoods. Less than 2% of the SBM congregation actually lived on church property. In addition, the theology and cultural practices of the SBM were markedly different from the typical African-American, southern, religious tradition. In many ways, the SBM possessed "layers of foreignness."[48] Multiple generations, within the context of SBM, would be required for true indigenization. Those who aspired to civic leadership within NPU-T resented SBM's influence and control over local politics. In addition, a small White population,

whose history dated back to the era when the West End was a White suburb of Atlanta, felt threatened by the presence of the SBM, specifically its impact on demographic patterns surrounding the property it controlled. Although a member of the SBM, Nkromo believed SBM sought control of the NPU-T for "the sake of control,"[49] not to advance specific policy goals and objectives in the interest of the African-American community as a whole. He believed this was true for the SBM's Black Slate as well. Beyond the goal of electing local, African-American politicians, a specific set of development goals and objectives for the African-American community did not exist. Nkromo took a moment to describe how he sought to reform this tendency within the SBM:

> My politics, that predated my membership in the SBM around community empowerment, pushed me to basically try to democratize and break up sort of the entrenched special interests (within NPU-T) including the Shrine (SBM). Even though I have benefited from the machinery, I immediately began to try to reform it. I didn't try to destroy it; I tried to get it to earn its keep. Which is to say if you want to control the politics, you should have demonstrated some measure of benefit for the community. And I challenged the membership in doing that.[50]

Through the vehicle of NPU-T, an effort was made to rethink traditional, urban land use patterns, given that the NPU system had the power to recommend zoning designations to the bureau of planning. Typically, zoning laws in urban areas privileged land-use strategies that are defined based upon use categories such as parks, green space, commercial space, and housing. The NPU-T sought to re-envision a zoning system that would include inclusionary space for urban agriculture. Potentially, the CFP wanted to turn Southwest Atlanta into the "breadbasket"[51] of the city because of its underdeveloped socioeconomic position relative to North Atlanta. The basic strategy was to create an

internal food system that would provide food security for Southwest Atlanta communities and, at the same time, produce a sizable surplus to sell externally to North Atlanta communities in the local, organic market sector. In addition to selling fresh produce, value added products would be marketed to local, regional, and national organic markets, specifically grocery stores and restaurants. The NPUTCFP sought to serve as an alternative, sustainable economic development model within low income, African-American communities. Taking cues from Portland, Oregon's zone ordinances, which designated space for urban agricultural use, the NPUTCFP began to map available land for food production in the district. The goal was to set a precedent for creating zoning laws that would prioritize urban agriculture in the city of Atlanta. Initial grading categories were constructed to distinguish between space that could be used for community gardens and urban farms (1+ acres). The NPU-T wanted to function as the principal body that promotes "certain types of economic development"[52] within the region it governs. Like local governments around the country, it envisioned itself as a conduit to attract sustainable, urban agricultural enterprises and intellectual resources into the zone through the creation of public policy and incentives that are urban agriculture friendly in the comprehensive sense. In addition, it attempted to link indigenous communities to local resources available to facilitate the establishment of urban agricultural industries. Often times, these resources were available, but African-American communities were not aware of their existence, nor do they possess the political linkages and skill sets necessary to access them. For Nkromo the NPU structure was of strategic importance. Nkromo argued that,

> the NPU is basically operating in the same way. We say we want to have an urban agricultural industry. We want to have a local food system, and so we try to create policies and incentives to get growers, those who are here already, to get into growing or to attract and recruit growers who have expertise that are outside the neighborhood. So we love to see commercial growers like East Point based Truly Living Well come, and we may help them find land, help them find funding, and do whatever we can to make it easy for them to grow food at the commercial level. Then we may just work with senior citizens buildings to get them to have a community garden or an institutional garden by trying to get them the resources or to connect them. Most of the time, it is about connectivity. A lot of times, the resources are already available in the network. Black people are just not aware, so we connect them to Bobby Wilson at Fulton County Extension, or Fred Conrad of the Atlanta Community Food Bank. And then we have everybody growing their own food from a personal garden in people's backyards up to an urban farm on an acre or more land.[53]

Economic development is perceived as the "primary rallying cry"[54] for urban agriculture in low-income neighborhoods. Historically speaking, it has been used for youth development and recreation. Given the economically depressed character of NPU-T, economic development is a more appropriate designation.

Another important aspect of the NPUTCFP is its emphasis on creating a "culture within the neighborhood that is focused on indigenous food production." [55] Within this context, a mixed economy is preferred to an externally, market-driven economy. Human scale agricultural production is favored as opposed to industrial based, agribusiness models. A mixed economic system encourages both subsistence production and production for the market. The aim is to encourage people to become farmers and not consumers of farm products. An attempt is being made to organize the entire food system through the auspices of the NPUTCFP. Currently, there are approximately 12 projects that include a model farm, CVC Urban Farms (CVCUF), institutional gardens at local churches, various community gardens, and a western two-acre, urban farm project

at Brown Middle School. The name itself, Community Food Project, is actually taken from a USDA grant, which supports the development of community food systems. The strategy is to retrofit the NPUTCFP to meet the requirements of the grant in order to access some portion of the $300,000 to build and purchase infrastructure such as heavy equipment, to support model farms in the zone, create jobs, build a horticultural education center, and publish a series of relevant pamphlets and books on urban agricultural and sustainable development. Houston's Bayou Farmer's Market is being used as a model to construct urban food markets that are profitable for small-scale farmers. The Bayou market restricts vendors participating in the market to a 180-mile radius from its base in Houston. In addition, the NPUTCFP seeks to mitigate the typical problems associated with low income and people of color gaining access to local organic produce by offering discounts in exchange for volunteer work on its model farm. The CVCUF is managed in cooperation with the CVC on a two-acre parcel owned by the SBM in the West End. The CVCUF conducts a weekly market as well as a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) share scheme. Under the CSA, shareholders pay a $400 fee at the beginning of the growing season in exchange for a weekly allotment of fresh, organic vegetables. Volunteers to the farm get a discount based upon the number of hours worked. In addition, SBM members who volunteer get an additional 10% discount. The farm also accepts WIC vouchers to increase food security in the NPU-T zone.

Another important aspect of constructing a culture of indigenous food production is the creation and dissemination of sustainable agricultural knowledge within the NPU-T communities. Nkromo locates his interest in agriculture "within his blood"[56] as a

descendant of rural African-American migrants from North Carolina. In many ways, he views "horticultural literacy" as a "primal consciousness"[57] that all communities possess and have access to, given the centrality of food production to human life and development. Once a person has basic information associated with growing food, engaging in the practice over time creates a wealth of knowledge rooted in local, cultural, socio-economic, and ecological conditions. The loss of this knowledge, within communities, is largely a function of the impact of western civilization, particularly the epistemological and ecological contradictions associated with industrial societies. Labor and knowledge related to the production of food is perceived as drudgery and/or the domain of primitive communities. The hyper-specialization of labor is a contributing factor as well. The connections between work and sustenance are no longer apparent given that a "culture of convenience"[58] defines the lifestyle and consumption habits of citizens in northern states unlike the Global South. We are "alienated from things that matter the most because life is no longer an integrated reality."[59] For Nkromo this reality is,

> a capacity to tap into a collective consciousness about how to produce food. Similar to how a child will get basic language literacy; at some point; he or she begins to access the world of ideas, which is our collective inheritance of human civilization. I believe a similar dynamic happens in horticultural education. Once you get a basic literacy, not only can you tap freely into the internet and to other resources, you also tap into a spatial kind of creativity about how to produce food. I create food production techniques not knowing how to grow food. There is a concept called raised beds. People, you know, build raise beds. Because I have a systemic way of thinking when I create the raised beds, recently I had three materials I was working with (1) leaf mulch from the city of Smyrna, (2) chicken manure compost from a landscape supply company, and (3) zoo poo which is a combination of elephant and large animal manure from the local zoo that is processed by a local merchant. So you have these three materials, and you're supposed to mix them. To make the beds, to

> me, it felt like cooking. The whole experience of making a bed felt like baking. I began to use similar techniques as my mom; my mom is a professional cook. I began to think about what I had observed her doing and being creative in the kitchen. And for me, the different types of amendments to the soil were like ingredients in a recipe. I began to layer each material, and I mixed it in a way you would pie dough. Instead of turning with a tiller, which would disturb the soil web and so forth; I took the hoe and folded the materials onto itself. This may actually be standard procedure somewhere in the world, but no one taught me how to do this. I just intuitively began to realize that if I manipulate materials in the way that I saw my mom gently knead dough, that it would mix thoroughly without overly mixing because you know if you knead dough too much it becomes tough and hard.[60]

For Nkromo, current conditions, i.e., poverty and global warming have given birth to the types of development strategies emerging in urban communities populated by the poor and people of color. The notion of placing food production at the center is not a novel idea and, in fact, is very ancient. Urban agriculture "is not creative in and of itself."[61] Ancient skills and techniques are being used to resolve contemporary problems. What is new is its use to "recalibrate in response to Western civilization's impact upon our development, comprehensively speaking, on issues such as education, healthcare, housing, etc."[62] For Nkromo, the "world is going to hell in a hand basket."[63] It is not probable that we can reverse the current trends associated with climate change. Reflecting on the implications of this perspective Nkromo lamented,

> I just don't think that the world will come to an end. I asked my mentor Dr. Mutavana when I became aware of all of the problems that the world had; I said "what the hell, it's over," he said you have to trust God. The world, the Earth, the universe, creation will survive mankind's bad choices. So I think that before we will implode, either through nuclear war or bad environmental choices, I think the world will correct human behavior. I think we will go by the way of the dinosaur before the world will go away.[64]

This perspective influences NPUTCFP approaches to sustainable development. An opportunity exists to "radically change our behavior, to petition the earth not to get rid of

us."[65] This can occur, in the short term at least, through making sustainable, sensible choices concerning our relationship to the natural world at the local level. Long-term solutions will require the creation of social movements in the tradition of Black Power and Pan-Africanism. Nkromo envisions the "best of African culture, history, and spiritual technology"[66] at the center of an international movement for a more just and sustainable society. Our preservation, as an African world community, is inextricably linked to the preservation of the planet. The leadership of the "current world order is genocidal to us and suicidal to themselves." [67] At this stage in our development, "small choices is all we can make because we don't have power."[68]

Analysis

Like the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, NPUTCFP land reform strategies can be categorized under *non-egalitarian reform*, specifically the market led agrarian type. Its economic development model projects reliance upon monetary capital flows from affluent, White communities into NPU-T neighborhoods. In a sense, Nkromo's characterization of Southwest Atlanta's potential to become "the breadbasket of Atlanta" is naïve. First, it ignores the historic relationship between the town and countryside under capitalist economic arrangements, where surplus value is appropriated and concentrated among urban elites through the devaluation of raw materials and labor in rural areas, hence rural underdevelopment. In an urban context, surplus value is appropriated and concentrated among urban elites through the devaluation of the labor of urban workers, consequently urban poverty. If we take into consideration the question of race and its linkages to class, the historic relationship between North Atlanta's business

elite and Southwest Atlanta's African-American community as a source of cheap labor would most likely continue even as the zone attempts to reinvigorate industry along sustainable lines. The previous history of African Americans as exploited tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and farm workers is also important to consider within this context. Second, unlike rural areas, NPU-T communities are located in an urban setting where property values, rents and energy costs, i.e., water and electricity are high in comparison to rural communities. This would most likely cut deeply into any profits for NPU-T based urban agricultural industries. Finally, it is important to consider that the NPUTCFP seeks to participate in the local, organic market sector. This is a high end, niche market. The conception of a breadbasket suggests that Atlanta communities would develop a greater dependence on food production coming from the NPU-T region. This would potentially put urban agricultural enterprises in direct competition with rural based small farmers and the larger agro-industrial complex, that is heavily subsidized by the state thus cheaper food prices. Although food production would expand, prices would have to decrease in an effort to compete with rural agricultural industries in the context of the free market. Another issue to consider is that market activity, in any form, is culturally bound. This is especially true for niche markets. The local, organic market sector is overwhelmingly made up of White, middle class consumers. Because of their *cultural proximity,* White growers control most farmers markets that serve this clientele. In addition, given that market prices associated with local, organic produce and value added products are high, healthy food continues to remain out of reach for most poor people and communities of color.

NPUTCFP's attempt to create an "indigenous food production culture" shares important aspects of the peasant ways integrated, agrarian reform model. First, it promotes subsistence production as an important feature of economic development. The emphasis on creating farmers as opposed to creating consumers of farm products is one example. The strategy of expanding institutional and community gardens in NPU-T neighborhoods is another example. Second, the NPUTCFP's stress upon valuing and expanding indigenous agricultural knowledge, within NPU-T neighborhoods, is consistent with the peasant way's view that "the accumulated experience and knowledge of peasants in using local resources is invaluable, so conditions must be created to ensure that these models flourish".[69] The broader, philosophical framework that drives NPU-T's conception of community development suggests a dedication to the idea that we must recalibrate our lives, given the impact of Westernization, in an effort to organize socio-economic institutions in an integrated, sustainable fashion. This echoes the peasant way's commitment to a cosmovision that seeks to "establish a harmony between human beings and Mother Nature."[70] As Nkromo argues, it is imperative that we make sustainable, sensible choices concerning our relationship to the natural world, at the local level.

We must also consider that NPUTCFP is very much influenced by the nationalist/autonomous tradition of AAT, in what can be described as an *organic context*. An organic context includes, but must be differentiated from, an externally motivated, nationalist ethic. A preoccupation with engaging external forces, i.e., "the enemy or other," has characterized contemporary approaches to nationalist development in the

African-American community. In some circles, this is described as crisis-oriented politics. This phenomenon is not unique to nationalist activist but expresses itself across the ideological spectrum within APT. The creation of the NPUTCFP can be properly understood as an extension of the SBM in the process of what Nkromo has described as indigenization. The formation of cultural institutions that provide for the material, social, and spiritual needs of a community is an important component of indigenization. The use of SBM land, political linkages, intellectual resources, and financial capital was key to the formation of NPUTCFP. The process of indigenization is necessarily linked to the question of land. This gives it its organic context. The concept of a *territory based food community* is useful to understand the significance of NPUTCFP land based strategies. A territory based food community is defined as "a community that produces/and or processes one or more products and is linked to a defined geographical area (i.e., village or region) or a particular ethnic group. Stable work and /or personal relationships need to exist among members of the community."[71] Recreating the territory based food community is synonymous with the peasant ways concept of food sovereignty, i.e., "the right of all peoples to plan their agriculture so as to first satisfy with priority all its national population, with abundant, culturally and ecologically appropriate, cheap food of good quality, throughout the year."[72] An organic nationalist ethic requires the creation of food communities because it seeks to clarify and actualize what a given community is for as a basis for describing what a given community is against.

Southeastern African-American Organic Farmer's Network (SAFFON)

Brief History

The Southeastern African-American Organic Farmer's Network (SAFFON) emerged in the summer of 2006 following a series of conversations between Mrs. Cynthia Hayes of Rural Women and Development and Dr. Owusu Bandele of Southern University's Agricultural Research and Extension Center. As a founding member of Rural Women and Development, Mrs. Hayes attended a workshop on African Americans and organic agriculture at Southern University facilitated by Dr. Bandele. This initiated a string of conversations that led to the formation of SAFFON. SAFFON was designed as a vehicle that African-American farmers could utilize to survive and develop within the agricultural sector. Historically, African-American farmers have been categorized as both minority and limited resource farmers. This intersection of race and class highlights the challenges that have contributed to the steady decline of African-American owned farmland and the number of African-American farmers. According to the USDA's Economic Research Service, in the past decade, organic agriculture has been one of the fastest growing sectors of U.S. agriculture. U.S. sales of organic products were $21.1 billion in 2008, over 3 percent of total food sales and reached $23.0 billion in 2009.[73] African-American farmer's participation in the organic agricultural sector is viewed by SAFFON as a viable alternative to involvement in conventional agricultural due to its dominance by large, white owned, corporate farms. The organic sector was chosen because of its perceived, socio-economic, environmental, and public health benefits. SAFFON's headquarters is located in Mrs. Hayes home office in Savannah, Georgia. We

interviewed Mrs. Hayes in Savannah to discuss the development and political philosophy of SAFFON.

Conversation

As a co-founder and principle organizer of Rural Women and Development, Mrs. Hayes initiated and coordinated a number of domestic and international projects committed to the development of African-American, small farming communities. Dr. Bandele, an organic farmer and cooperative extension research scientist at Southern University, invited Mrs. Hayes to an organic farmer's workshop based upon her work with African-American farmers in McIntosh County, Georgia. According to Mrs. Hayes, a strong, working relationship developed that led to the formation of SAFFON. SAFFON is the only national organization of its kind specifically dedicated to supporting African-American farmers in organic agriculture. Given that organic farming is considered non-traditional, in the American context, the lack of government funding for projects in areas such as research and development, extension work, and agricultural loans discourages farmers in general from participating. If the legacies of racial and class discrimination against African-American farmers are added to the scenario, gaining access to organic markets and the knowledge associated with organic production practices becomes more problematic. According to SAFFON, this is evident if you take into consideration that although organic agricultural markets are expanding the number of African-American farmers, those committed to organic production are few. Some of the reasons for this gap include (1) the lack of support for organic production by agricultural professionals, (2) the lack of available, accurate information on the benefits of organic production, and (3)

the economic and technological challenges associated with transitioning from conventional to organic production.[74] SAFFON seeks to bridge this gap. First it wants to "grow farmers."[75] Mrs. Hayes argues,

> that's the key because the larger the "fabric," and that's just the way I look at it, its like a quilt; we are just building a quilt of farmers. That is what we are doing. The more we get farmers, and there are a lot of farmers (African-American) coming back and reclaiming their land, I would say 30% of the farmers in our network have moved back from the Northeast or from somewhere.[76]

Currently, there are 191 farmers in SAFFON. The average age of a member farmer is 51. They are located within six states in the southeastern region and the Virgin Islands: Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, and St. Croix Island.[77] The stated goal of SAFFON is to add "10 farmers per year" to the network.[78] Many members are independent, smallholders; however, most are organized into five cooperatives. In many ways, SAFFON's work compensates for the problems associated with the existing land grant cooperative extension system. It does this through multiple strategies. Education and training is a key component. SAFFON conducts a yearly, weekend intensive retreat to help African-American farmers acquire organic certification. The retreat includes classes which (1) give an overview of the history and culture of African Americans in agriculture, (2) provides an analysis of the socio-economic, environmental, and health benefits of organic production, (3) facilitates completing the USDA organic certification application, (4) shows farmers how to access both traditional and non-traditional organic markets, and (5) gives an overview of organic production practices and farm planning. SAFFON's approach to educating African-American farmers is culturally centered. This is an important distinction between SAFFON and

traditional cooperative extension strategies led by U.S. land grant institutions. Hayes described the context under which the importance of a cultural approach became clear:

> It was real evident when he (Dr. Bandele) and I were talking that anything we would do would have a cultural component to it. That was really, extremely important in terms of the farmer's organization because we wanted the farmers to take ownership and to take pride because to be a farmer is a prideful thing, not something to be ashamed of. Black farmers have taken that attitude.[79]

The use of African-American poetry and music are important features of the workshop presentations and sessions. The emphasis on getting organic certification is a central component of the retreat. Within the broader U.S. sustainable agriculture movement, organic certification is a controversial subject. Many advocate getting certified because it ensures that there are clearly defined production criteria and structures of accountability that guarantees the quality and safety of organic produce and value added products. Others suggest that organic certification is too complicated, cumbersome, and true organic standards have been co-opted and weakened by big agriculture. Nonetheless, SAFFON advocates certification for two reasons. First, Mrs. Hayes argues that it gives farmers a sense of authenticity and legitimacy, i.e., it "makes them feel good."[80] This is extremely important given the traditional view of African-American farmers as inefficient, lazy, and poor. Second, it allows them to get a larger return on what is produced because the organic market is fundamentally a high end, niche market. To this end, SAFFON also serves as a troubleshooter and extension agent for member farmers. One of the best examples is a recent project in the U.S. Virgin Islands on the island of St. Croix. Once considered the breadbasket of the Caribbean, St Croix now imports close to 99.5% of its food.[81] An attempt is being made to organically reinvigorate local food

production. The University of the Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Service no longer possesses expertise in sustainable agriculture, given the islands dependence on food imports and the tourist industry. SAFFON was approached to retrain extension agents and farmers from the Virgin Islands Farmers Cooperative (VIFC) in organic agriculture. VIFC has 73 members with control over 1010 acres of farmland. SAFFON also serves as a vehicle through which its members gain access to traditional markets in the organic sector. This is particularly true for large retail outlets such as Whole Foods. SAFFON is a mediator of sorts to ensure that African-American farmers receive fair prices for their products. SAFFON has developed relationships with national, organic seed companies such as Seeds of Change and Johnny Seeds in order to receive discounts for member farmers. In addition, SAFFON is involved in setting up farmer's markets. A notable example is the Forsyth Farmer's Market in Savannah, Georgia. The market was established in May 2009 under the auspices of the Savannah Local Food Collaborative (SLFC). SAFFON is a leading member of the SLFC. The SLFC was established to provide fresh, locally grown, healthy food to Savannah communities.

In addition to growing farmers, SAFFON seeks to serve as an advocate for low resource and African-American farmers. This includes pushing for policy standards in the annual Farm Bill that support smallholder and organic agriculture. According to Mrs. Hayes, historically, African-American farmers remain "outside of the loop"[82] when it comes to forming and benefiting from U.S. farm policy based upon "our specific cultural needs."[83] Serving as a watchdog for potential funding, USDA program deadlines,

continuing education programs, and regulating organic standards are important aspects of SAFFON's mission. Hayes reflected on the practical implications of such a commitment:

> I had a farmer who went to the NRCS (National Resource Conservation Service) to apply for water support equipment, put in a well, you know everything. The guy who was there, a white guy, told him the deadline had passed. I knew that wasn't right. I said no because I sent you the stuff about the deadline. I didn't bother to call the guy [the NRCS local representative]. I contacted the Black guy who was in charge of the entire region, all of this area, and his second in command was Angie Boone. He said no that's not right. He turned around and told Angie Boone. Angie Boone called the guy and said "take the application today." But see what would have happened; they would not have gotten [access to] that water source because there wouldn't have been advocacy. That is a big piece of SAFFON. If it hadn't been somebody who knew better, ok, what happened was it expanded their production level, almost doubled it. So when they had difficulty making payments on the land, they were able to catch up and hold on to that land.[84]

In doing so, SAFFON has partnered strategically with sustainable development activists and organizations across class and ethnic lines. The Local Food for Local Power (LFLP) initiative is one such example. In partnership with the Southern Sustainable Agricultural Working Group (SAWG), SAFFON member, VIFC, developed a "territory wide initiative that engages diverse sectors toward heightening legislative action and awareness to improve food access."[85] Another important example is SAFFON's sister organization the Southeastern Green Network (SOGREEN). SOGREEN seeks to create a network of community organizations, environmental activists, agricultural specialists, and HBCU/1890 land grant institutions to develop a comprehensive, green development agenda for the Southeast. SAFFON serves as the sustainable agriculture arm of SOGREEN. One of its most vibrant projects is its Youth in Agricultural Camp, which

seeks to train young people, particularly low income and ethnic minorities, in sustainable development skills and philosophy through sustainable agriculture.

For Mrs. Hayes, the organizational culture of SAFFON is unique in light of the history of African-American social movements in the United States. "Given the history of Black folks organizing" she argues, "I am in awe of the level of camaraderie" within SAFFON.[86] Transparency is of paramount importance and is considered key to the level of solidarity within the organization. SAFFON is farmer directed. It is governed through three main structures (1) an advisory board composed completely of farmers, (2) a board of directors comprised of farmers, community organizers, and academicians, and (3) a working staff. Mrs. Hayes serves as the organization's executive director. Farmers educate other farmers through mentorship programs. This is viewed as a break with the traditional agricultural professional vs. farmer dichotomy that characterizes most agricultural extension programs run by U.S. land grant institutions. New farmers are connected to regional advisors; however, farmers are encouraged to communicate with each other, beyond their advisors, around issues such as production, financing, troubleshooting equipment, and locating new markets.

Land loss within AARFC is a function of two interrelated issues in the eyes of SAFFON organizers: (1) theft by whites and (2) African-American farmers do not have the necessary information to take advantage of existing programs and strategies to keep their land. SAFFON does not overtly prioritize engaging directly in activities associated with land retention and African-American farmers. This is perceived as a "long-term"

goal.[87] It specifically engages in actions that will, in the short-term, improve the quality of life of AARFC. Reflecting on her constituency Hayes suggest that,

> most of my farmers are in a short-term mode. So, ok, I mean one of the things that both Owusu and I continue to work on is education around culture and around land retention issues, but like I said, it is not the focus of SAFFON. When we talk about land retention issues, we always come back to the economic issues. Because that's what the farmers are really interested in. When you have a farmer and his tractor is down, and he's got to get stuff in the ground, all that stuff about land reform, he aint got time, you know, because he has his mortgage and his kids. And he's got this and he's got that. So that's where we stay, we stay at the ground.[88]

Participating in the organic sector is viewed as a way to increase the profit margins of African-American farmers, hence making African-American farms sustainable in an economic sense. This is considered the best way to guarantee land retention in AARFC. According to Hayes,

> the issues in terms of land retention are reduced because their economics has increased. We spend more time growing farmers and growing good farmers, so their economics will change. That has been more of our direction. It is not something that we concentrate on in our discussions with farmers, but I figure that if we can figure out a way for you to make a whole bunch of money, then you can keep your land, not that it is not an issue. That is not what I am saying. But one of the things we talk to farmers often about is how to survive on your own without being dependent or trying to get something from somebody.[89]

Following this strategy, SAFFON farmers are encouraged to work cooperatively to exchange intellectual, technological, social, and fiscal resources in order to survive and develop. SAFFON is not against using lending institutions, specifically the USDA, but it encourages farmers to ask the question, "What can I do first before becoming dependent upon external resources?"[90] This doesn't suggest that the question of land reform is irrelevant, philosophically speaking; however, SAFFON seeks to "stay at the ground"[91]

by addressing the basic economic and cultural issues that impact African-American farmers.

Analysis

Consistent with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives and the Neighborhood Planning Unit-T Community Food Project, SAFFON's approach to the issue of land reform can be categorized under *non-egalitarian reform*, specifically the market led agrarian type. What allows us to place SAFFON's political and development philosophy within this category is its stated commitment to utilizing organic agricultural markets as the primary mechanism through which African-American farmers can continue to survive and develop. Although SAFFON has identified white theft by private citizens, private banks, and the U.S. state as causal factors connected to the loss of African-American farmland, it steers clearly away from strategies that argue overtly for land redistribution and/or compensation for African-American farmers. SAFFON's belief that land reform is a relevant but a long term goal possibly speaks to the historical challenges and opposition experienced by African-American social movement organizations in the U.S. that have advocated for land reform and the redistribution of wealth.

SAFFON's emphasis on growing farmers, in a culturally centered fashion, is consistent with aspects of the peasant ways notion of genuine and integrated land reform, specifically the valorization of the culture of African-American farmers. Generally, the sustainable agricultural movement privileges the agricultural history and production knowledge of Western Europe and the United States. The term organic, conceptually speaking, is often considered outside of the cultural development and history of people of

color. This impacts the degree to which African-American farmers can take ownership over their participation and development within the organic market sector. SAFFON's vision of locating organic agriculture within the broader context of sustainable development social movements is important to consider as well. This is clear given its designation as a sister organization of SOGREEN. The national debate on climate change and clean, renewable energy must, out of necessity, include a discussion on agriculture. Conventional agriculture is the largest source of non-point pollutants that contaminate ground water reserves because of its use of synthetic fertilizers. In addition, conventional agriculture has an enormous carbon footprint because it is heavily dependent upon global transport networks that rely on fossil fuels. SAFFON's approach to organizing African-American farmers is unique and consistent with the peasant ways emphasis on farmer led development and education. Farmer led development assumes that peasant agricultural knowledge and innovation is valuable and effective. It challenges the idea that non-farmer, laboratory based, scientific agriculture is more important than the practical experiences of farmers in the field. In addition, given the history of African-American farmers, in relationship to agricultural extension agents, the farmer to farmer paradigm of farmer education provides a context to break the debt cycle associated with conventional agriculture given that land grant, agricultural extension services are often connected to the class interest of the agroindustrial complex. This is consistent, in many ways, with the autonomous/nationalist tradition of AAAT. The construction of internal, cooperative, socioeconomic networks to mediate the negative cost related to competition with corporate agricultural giants, within the framework of a

capital-intensive agricultural model, is a common strategy used inside the African-American agrarian tradition historically speaking. The belief of *doing more with less* is also important to consider if we take into account the idea that the earth's resources are limited. Within organic/sustainable farming, great emphasis is placed upon building *closed systems* of production. A closed system of production uses farm resources as the basis for maintaining soil fertility and providing for the energy needs of the farm. In other words, it seeks to reduce the use of farm inputs as much as possible, hence lessening dependence on costly fertilizers, seeds, equipment, and pesticides sold by conventional agricultural industries. Properly viewed, the use of closed production systems contributes to the social and economic autonomy of farmers. Like the Neighborhood Planning Unit- T Community Food Project, we consider SAFFON's participation in the organic market sector problematic in at least two ways. First, given that the organic food sector is a high-end niche market in the United States, African-American farmers are largely economically dependent upon the white middle class. Second, although income is provided to African-American farmers, this does not necessarily expand food security within African-American communities given (1) the small size and fragility of the African-American middle class and (2) the fact that the vast majority of African Americans perceive organic food as unaffordable.

Conclusion

As Michael C. Dawson argues, "increasing our understanding of African-American political discourse requires us to understand how concepts that reappear in black political debate change over time or are interpreted differently within a given time

period."[92] This basic assumption can be applied to our understanding of the praxis and development philosophy of contemporary African-American agrarian social movement organizations. Our study suggests that instead of operating out of a fixed set of ideological principles, aspects of both the nationalist/autonomous and liberal streams of agrarian political thought coexist within the FSC, the NPUTCFP, and the SAFFON. The nationalist/autonomous tradition expresses itself most likely as a function of the constituencies served by all three formations. In turn, this strongly influences the organizational cultures of the FSC, the NPUTCFP, and the SAFFON. The historical and contemporary legacy of African-American farmers as both minority and limited resource farmers provides the social and economic context for a vibrant nationalism. The peasant way, as a development philosophy, seems to find its strongest expression within this nationalist ethic. This ideological tendency is counterbalanced by a liberal approach to the question of land reform. Consistently, market based strategies to resolve problems associated with the unequal distribution of land, African-American land loss, and the lack of access to mainstream agricultural markets are used to advance the interest of AARFC. It is our belief that this occurs for two reasons. First, the minority status of African Americans reinforces the idea that gradual change, through existing social, political and economic arrangements, is the only viable strategy to resolve the problems faced by AARFC. To speak of land reform in the U.S. context seems unrealistic given that whites represent close to 70% of the U.S. population. Second, the entrenchment of private property values, within American culture, serves as a natural ideological barrier to any consideration of the need to redistribute land and wealth.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 4

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: THE CITY IS NOT THE BLACK MAN'S LAND

> The city is the base we must organize as the factories were organized in the 1930s. We must struggle to control and govern the cities, as workers struggled to control and govern the factories of the 1930s.[1]

> We were a land based agrarian people from Africa. We were uprooted from Africa and we spent 200 years developing our culture as Black Americans and then we left the South. We uprooted ourselves and attempted to transplant this culture to the pavements of the industrialized North. It was a transplant that did not take. I think if we had stayed in the South we would have been a stronger people and because the connection between the South of the 20s, 30s, and 40s has been broken, it's very difficult to understand who we are.[2]

Introduction

In 1965, James Boggs, in his seminal essay *The City Is the Black Man's Land*, suggested that the massive migration of African Americans into the major cities of the United States was potentially a defining moment in the history of African American, radical social movements.[3] Given that cities, according to Boggs, served as the political, financial, and technological centers of an advanced America, African Americans taking control of urban space was considered a revolutionary act of great importance. For Boggs and his comrades in Detroit's Organization for Black Power, "the city is the base which we must organize as the factories were organized in the 1930s."[4] As a child growing up in Philadelphia, I heard this mantra often, "the city is the Black man's land." Both of my parents, some of my extended family, and a variety of close friends were members of a closely-knit cadre organization connected to James and Grace Lee Boggs.

I often found myself listening to intense ideological discussions around this issue although I was too immature, intellectually and politically speaking, to grapple with its implications and contradictions. In this work, however, we have endeavored to engage the contradictions associated with this assumption and how they have shaped APT and African-American social movements. More specifically, we have, in theoretical terms, considered August Wilson's notion that our migration to northern, urban industrial centers was a transplant that did not take.[5]

To demonstrate the utility of this approach, the *recentering of the land question* was necessary. Recentering the land question allows us to clarify our understanding of the historical development of African-American communities. In more explicit terms, it allows us to remarry the socio-economic history of African Americans to the earth's history. We have emphasized that human communities are both biological and social entities. Our identity and our development are intimately connected to the earth and its predetermined ecological processes. As Cabral suggest, who we are is a dynamic synthesis of the "material and spiritual condition(s) of society and expresses relationship(s) both between man and nature and between the different classes within a society."[6] The concept of an *ecological revolution* helps us to understand this dynamic and gives us insight into the socio-cultural formation of African-American communities. Dubois's conception of double consciousness, "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body,"[7] takes on new meaning within this context. The modernization project, as an extension of the expansion of Western Europe and the formation of the American state, divided the soul of African communities not simply along the color line but along lines that would create competing

perspectives of their relationship to the earth, i.e., their land ethic. In popular culture, derogatory terms such as nigger, guinea bird, slave, and geechee that exist in the social realm are inextricably linked to negative ideas associated with rural culture and so are the terms bush negro, country, cotton picker, and pagan. This is what we have described as the emergence of the urban bias. Africana political historians and political theorist have been shaped by the urban bias. By extension, it is has informed their work on African-American communities.

We have demonstrated that the urban bias emerges out of an ecological revolution taking place within African-American communities. In addition, the urban bias informs how we understand their development, pre and post the formation of the American state. Specific phases associated with the ecological revolution include (1) the period of contact and immersion. This phase is related to the Maafa and the extraction of African labor from the continent and its resultant impact on the development of continental Africa and African communities in the Western Hemisphere. What can be described as the disarticulation of African agrarian cultures, through social and physical violence, characterizes this phase. In the context of AARFC, the social and economic structures of neo-anglo culture attempted to negate AAC through the institutional mechanisms of an evolving American state and a plantation based economy. Cabral describes this phenomenon succinctly when he states, "imperialist capital imposed new types of relationships on indigenous society."[8] Resistance by African-American communities emerges during this phase as well and begins to shape the contours of AASM and AAPT. The traditional dichotomy within AAPT, between the liberal tradition and the nationalist/autonomous tradition, would emerge as a function of the degree to which

AASM and AAPT were informed by the land ethic of AAC. The second phase can be associated chronologically with the period between emancipation and the height of African-American farmland ownership (1863-1910). This phase is characterized by the challenges associated with AARFC determining the nature of their development following the abolishment of chattel slavery and the socioeconomic reorganization of the American state during the reconstruction and post reconstruction periods. Competing perspectives over the land question, within AASM and AAPT, become entrenched during this phase. The emphasis on capital accumulation and capital exchange begins to govern the land ethic of AASM. The wisdom and sensibilities associated with ecological rationality and ecological exchange are peripherialized. The third phase corresponds to the First and Second Great Migrations (1910-1970). It is characterized by the mass migration of AARFC to urban, industrial centers. It includes the emergence and decline of the Second Reconstruction, the progressive loss of African-American farmland, and the full incorporation of the urban bias into African-American notions of the good life. The fourth and final phase, 1970-present, corresponds to a period we will describe as "returning to the source."[9] This phase begins with the energy crisis of the early 1970s. Significant events and issues include the absorption of the energies of AASM into urban, electoral politics both local and national, the rise of the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM), the expansion of the African-American middle class coupled with its associated consumption habits, isolation from the African-American working class and poor, the triumph of neoliberalism, national environmental crisis such as Hurricane Katrina, the Gulf oil spill, and the Haitian earthquake, and the global recognition of climate change.

It is within the fourth phase that we can understand the reemergence and birth of new and old social movement organizations attempting to recenter the land question hence, returning to the source. Our study suggests that organizations such as FSC, SAAFON, and NPUTCFP have emerged during a period that has forced African Americans to grapple with the linkages that exist between rural and urban poverty, ecological instability, and the disintegration of African-American communities. FSC's continued work and legacy is an extension of the Second Reconstruction. It is worth noting that the Pigford case, to date, is the largest documented settlement and admission by the American state that reparations can be used as a strategy to help resolve problems within African-American communities born of racial oppression in the United States. In his opinion on Pigford v. Glickman, Judge Friedman contends,

> It is difficult to resist the impulse to try to undo all the broken promises and years of discrimination that have led to the precipitous decline in the number of African-American farmers in the United States. The Court has before it a proposed settlement of a class action lawsuit that will not undo all that has been done. Despite that fact, however, the Court finds that the settlement is a fair resolution of the claims brought in this case. And a good first step towards assuring that the kind of discrimination that has been visited on African-American farmers since Reconstruction will not continue into the next century.[10]

The work of organizations such as SAFFON and NPUTCFP seem to be an extension of continued efforts within the African-American community to address urban and rural poverty against the backdrop of an increased awareness within the American public of problems associated with conventional agriculture, urban sprawl, and environmental degradation. Increasingly, sustainability and the green economy have become watchwords used by multiple sectors of the American public to characterize models aimed at saving the U.S. economy from potential collapse. As a socio-economic

philosophy, the green economy and sustainable development strategies seek to create jobs and expand the economic productivity of the U.S. while protecting the ecological integrity of its natural resource base. For many, sustainable food production systems are at the center of any viable green economy. Van Jones, co-founder of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and the Obama administration's former special advisor for green jobs, enterprise, and innovation, calls for a "localized food system supported by municipal and state governments" in his text *The Green Collar Economy.*[11] Storm Cunningham argues that "extractive industries, like conventional agriculture," will be replaced by "rehabilitative industries, like restorative agriculture" as the primary economic growth engine for the 21st century. [12] More and more, it seems a growing consensus is building to support the idea that sustainable agriculture represents the future of American food production. According to the USDA's Economic Research Service, in the past decade, organic agriculture has become one of the fastest growing sectors of U.S. agriculture.[13] Although organic agricultural markets are expanding, the number of small, limited resource farmers of color committed to organic production are few. Typically, sustainable agriculture production practices and the consumption of organic foods are perceived as the purview of the white, middle class. Poor communities and communities of color are most often priced out of the organic market. SAFFON and NPUTCFP challenge these tendencies as they strategically respond to market opportunities and development trends within the context of the broader American political economy. The rise of urban food production is another important response to the class character of mainstream organic agriculture. It has become a common strategy within poor communities and communities of color in the United States to address issues of poverty

and food insecurity. Will Allen's Growing Power in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Ladonna Redmond's Institute for Community Resource Development in Chicago, Illinois, and the People's Grocery Store in Oakland, California are notable examples outside of the southeast region.

Reflecting upon the relevance of Africana agrarianism in an international context is extremely important as well. The resurgence of agrarian social movements and the call for new sustainable development models, what La Via Campesina has called the *peasant way*, has taken center stage for two important reasons: (1) international recognition of climate change and (2) communities within the global south contesting neoliberalism. The Cuban experience is an important example given that it has always fascinated and garnered the support of progressive African-American intellectuals and activists. Recent trends (since 1989) in Cuba in the areas of agricultural development and land reform suggest the need to rethink classical models of industrial growth and agricultural production. As a product of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the resultant loss of Cuba's trading partners through the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) and the United States led trade embargo, Cuba has been forced to question its use of models that depend heavily on external inputs, both ideological and material, for food security and technological development. The localization of food production, organic agriculture, the decentralization of state-farms, a return to labor intensive methods of agricultural production, and a movement towards re-linking historically urban populations to rural areas are strategies that on the surface would suggest that Cuba is moving backwards. The *greening of the Cuban revolution,* [14] however, contends that what is occurring is a process of ideological, social, and economic reorganization, which assumes that in the

process of seeking equitable socio-economic relationships, ecological stability must also be considered. This holistic approach to development is not an urban based, perpetual growth centered model. In other words, Cuba has begun to reevaluate the assumption that national development can be measured solely upon the degree to which the majority of its members have been removed from rural areas, agricultural labor, and the unlimited expansion of its population's per capita rate of consumption of goods and services. What is also significant is that many of the strategies used to reorganize Cuban society, on both an ideological and practical level, resembles preindustrial, peasant-based forms of social, economic, and technological organization. The trend seems to be that a re-examination of indigenous forms of spiritual, ideological, social, and technological knowledge has an important role in reconceptualizing contemporary development models. In this context, AAC takes on new meaning for the development of Africana rural and farming communities. In April 2010, more than 35,000 people from 140 countries gathered in Cochabamba, Bolivia and developed the historic *Cochabamba People's Agreement*, a consensus-based document reflecting substantive solutions to the climate crisis."[15] The conference was spearheaded by Evo Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president, in response to the failed U.N. sponsored climate change talks in Copenhagen. The Cochabamba People's Agreement contends that climate change is a function of a "capitalist development model (that) has created societies and ways of life that are incompatible with nature."[16] Corporate agriculture was identified as one of the principal sources contributing to climate change.

> We declare and denounce that agribusiness and the inherent logic of production of foods oriented towards the market and not for the right to food, is one of the main causes of climate change through changes in the use of land (deforestation and the

> expansion of the agricultural frontier), monocrops, the excessive use of products derived from the petrochemical industry, food processing, and all the logistics involved in the transportation of food towards the consumer and also through the model of society, economy and culture of production and consumption.[17]

The reintroduction of models of development consistent with the peasant way was offered as a viable alternative.

> We demand that governments commit themselves to uphold the model of agriculture of peasant farmers and indigenous/original practices, and other ecological models and practices that contribute to solving the problem of climate change and ensure food sovereignty, understood as the right of peoples to control their own seeds, lands, water and the production of food, ensuring, through agro-ecological, local, and culturally appropriate production, the people's access to sufficient, varied and nutritious foods complementary to Mother Earth emphasizing autonomous (participative, communitarian and shared) production of all nations and people.[18]

Recent experiences in Haiti are important to reflect upon as well. Following the devastating earthquake, international aid agencies and governments, under the Haiti Rebuilding Commission, sought to reconstruct Haiti after centuries of poverty, political conflict, and social instability. Chief among these strategies was to import green revolution technologies[19] to help re-establish the Haitian food system. At the forefront of this effort was the multinational agribusiness corporation Monsanto. Monsanto committed to donating 60,000 seed sacks (475 tons) of hybrid corn seeds and vegetable seeds, some of them treated with highly toxic pesticides.[20] Haitian farmers rejected the proposed strategy. Under the leadership of the Peasant Movement of Papay (MPP), Monsanto's efforts were characterized as a new earthquake.[21] Chavannes Jean-Baptiste, the executive director of MPP and the spokesperson for the National Peasant Movement of the Congress of Papay (MPNKP), suggested that Monsanto's efforts were, "a very strong attack on small agriculture, on farmers, on biodiversity, on Creole seeds and on

what is left of our environment in Haiti."[22] The MPP planned to burn the seeds if received. In addition, a march was organized to protest the presence of Monsanto on June 4, 2010, World Environment Day.[23]

Recommendations

Within this work, we have explored the theoretical importance of the land question to a political history of African-American social movements and its impact on African-American political thought. In addition, we have considered the significance of African-American agrarian social movements and rural and farming communities to the well being of African-American communities. Given the limited scope of our study, future efforts to expand the area of *Africana Environmental History and Politics* must, out of necessity, take on multiple forms. Because of the centrality of mother earth to the development of human communities, interdisciplinary approaches to *Africana Land Studies* are a necessity. Using our *Phases of the African-American Ecological Revolution,* for instance, a more detailed periodization of African-American history and culture could be developed. Specific studies of each phase would seek to reveal better details charting the emergence and influence of the urban bias on AAPT. In addition, contemporary approaches to AAPT, within the EJM tradition, typically borrow heavily from American environmentalist thought. The only comprehensive text on African-American environmental thought, to date, is Kimberly Smith's *African-American Environmental Thought: Foundations.*[24] She locates the origins of AAET within the tradition of American democratic agrarianism, not AAC or its descendants in North America. The EJM tradition would benefit from the development of an environmental philosophy rooted in the culture and history of African-American communities. This

would help transcend the challenges associated with African Americans perceiving environmental issues as a *white thing*.

Recentering the land question would be helpful in developing a genuine *Africana Political Economy* as well. Prioritizing the tradition of ecological exchange challenges us to rethink the tendency to view the equitable distribution of financial capital and capital accumulation, in radical and/or liberal forms, as the answer to the social problems of Africana communities in a world where natural capital is shrinking rapidly.

Comparative studies of Africana Agrarian Social Movements (AASM) would also be useful. The issue of land reform is of particular importance. AASM are noticeably absent within La Via Campesina compared to agrarian social movements in Latin America and Europe. Studies of Africana communities whose land ethic was shaped by slavery are necessary, particularly in the context of the Western Hemisphere, to look for similarities and differences in their development and how AASM have emerged to address the unique challenges of these communities. Comparative studies of Afro Columbian, Afro Venezuelan, African-American and Afro-Brazillian communities would be invaluable. In the area of development studies, for instance, Afro Cuban participation in the reruralization process seems to be influenced by the legacy of slavery. Many White Cubans remained peasants after the revolution in 1959. Afro Cubans migrated to the cities partly as a result of the perception that agriculture labor and slavery were synonymous. Because of this, it seems that the transition from urban to rural lifeways was easier for White Cubans than it was for Afro Cubans. Comparative studies with African-American communities might be useful in this respect. Specifically, we need to answer the question how has the influence of slavery impacted African American's view

of the plight of African-American farmers and the urban agricultural movement? This is particularly important from a public health perspective. African Americans are 1. 4 times more likely to be obese than Whites, and 4 out of 5 African-American women are overweight and/or obese according to the U.S. Office of Minority Health.[25] Some scholars link this problem to what are called food deserts. Food deserts are large and isolated geographic areas where mainstream grocery stores are absent or distant.[26] What factors compel African Americans to make certain food choices and opt for food deserts as opposed to urban agriculture would be a valuable study. How existing property relations, zoning laws, and power relationships influence these choices is important to consider as well.

In conclusion, much of what this study has attempted to explore and share is not difficult to understand. We believe, however, that at this juncture in the earth's history, it is of the utmost importance that we begin to reflect more deeply and sincerely upon our lives, the lives of our children, and the central role that land will always play in our survival and development as human beings. We say the earth's history because somewhere in the course of the violent trek across the Atlantic in the belly of slave ships, somewhere in the irrigation channels African women created in the rice fields of South Carolina; somewhere in the sugar cane fields of Louisiana where African men spent their lives sweetening the tea of strangers; and somewhere in the cotton fields of Alabama and Mississippi where AARFC spent their energies enriching the pockets of those who would destroy them, African Americans have developed a genuine aversion to the land and have made the mistake of believing that human life and history are significant in spite of a substantive relationship to the earth. African Americans have forgotten by force, by

exhaustion, and by selfishness born out of fear that human beings grow out of the earth and in a basic sense, are forever dependent upon her for their existence. In the process of affirming their humanity, African Americans have embraced the ideological myths associated with the urban bias by assuming that the good life only requires resolving socio-economic conflict between human beings and expanding their capacity to both access and consume the earth's resources while, at the same time, distancing themselves from nature. This could not be further from the truth!

> Asase Yaa[27] sorrow is yours.
> Asase Yaa, happiness is yours.
> Asase Yaa, if I am about to die, it is on you that I depend.
> Asase Yaa, while I am alive, it is on you that I depend.
> Asase Yaa who receives my body, we are addressing you
> and you will understand.
> We are addressing you and you will understand.[28]

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 5

[1] James Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 46.

[2] Marilyn Elkins, ed., *August Wilson: A Case Study* (New York: Garland, 1994), 4.

[3] James Boggs, *Racism,* 39.

[4] Ibid., 46.

[5] Elkins, *August Wilson,* 4.

[6] Amilcar Cabral, *Return to the Source* (New York: African Information Service, 1973), 66.

[7] W.E.B. Dubois, *Souls of Black Folk* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 1.

[8] Cabral, *Return,* 58.

[9] Ibid., 63.

[10] Michael T. Martin and Marilyn Yaquinto, eds., *Redress for Historical Injustices in the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 667.

[11] Van Jones, *The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 125-132.

[12] Storm Cunningham, *The Restoration Economy: The Greatest New Growth Frontier* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc., 2002), 113-128.

[13] Catherine Greene and Carolyn Dimitri, "Organic Agriculture: Organic Market Overview," USDA Economic Research Service, http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Organic/ (accessed October 10, 2010).

[14] Peter Rosset and Medea Benjamin, *The Greening of the Revolution: Cuba's Experiment With Organic Agriculture* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1994); The *greening of the Cuban revolution* used in this instance should not be confused with the *Green Revolution* that gave birth to conventional, industrial agriculture.

[15] World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, "Final Conclusions Working Group 1: Structural Causes," Working Group 1, http://pwccc.wordpress.com/2010/04/30/final-conclusions-working-group-1-structural-causes/ (accessed October 10, 2010)

[16] Ibid.

[17] World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, "Final Conclusions Working Group 17: Agriculture and Food Sovereignty," Working Group 17, http://pwccc.wordpress.com/2010/04/29/final-conclusions-working-group-17-agriculture-and-food-sovereignty/ (accessed October 10, 2010).

[18] Ibid.

[19] Green revolution technologies, in this instance, refer to technologies developed from 1943-present, which are the basis of conventional agriculture. They include the use of hybrid seeds, synthetic petrochemical based fertilizers, toxic pesticides, and extractive industry approaches to irrigation.

[20] Beverly Bell, "Haitian Farmers Commit to Burning Monsanto Hybrid Seeds," Truth Out, http://www.truthout.org/haitian-farmers-commit-burning-monsanto-hybrid-seeds59616 (accessed October 10, 2010).

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Kimberly Smith, *African-American Environmental Thought: Foundations* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2007), 43-47.

[25] Office of Minority Health, "Obesity and African Americans," Office of Minority Health, http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/content.aspx?ID=6456 (accessed October 10, 2010).

[26] Mari Gallagher, "The Food Desert," Mari Gallagher, http://fooddesert.net/ (accessed October 10, 2010).

[27] Name for the earth among Akan people of Ghana, West Africa. The Akan believe that the earth is a feminine reality that was born on a Thursday.

[28] Harold Courlander, *A Treasury of African Folklore: The Oral Literature, Traditions, Myths, Legends, Epics, Tales, Recollections, Wisdom, Sayings and Humor of Africa* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1976), 102.

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